

Minutes of the July 26, 2022 Board Meeting

Hartford Bridge Club Board of Trustees Meeting July 26, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 1:32 p.m. Felix noted that Ann and Ben had Covid and would be absent; Roger has a conflict and would also be absent. Felix volunteered to do the minutes.

Present: Felix Springer, John Willoughby, Trevor Reeves, Carole Amaio, Bill Wininger, Nancy Calderbank, Mike Wavada, Donna Feir. Also present: John Dinius, Linda Starr, Joanne Lloyd.

The minutes of the June 14 board meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report:

Trevor Reeves, as treasurer, gave a thorough presentation of the club's current financial status as well as projections for 2023.

The key takeaways:

Paid membership of 420 is down approximately 10% from last year. Net game revenues declined from the second quarter and are significantly short of what is needed to cover monthly expenses of approximately \$6500. Bottom line, year to date the club is \$3,069 in the black after nine months due to unplanned donations and profitable lesson activity of approximately \$26,000. The favorable result will likely not be sustained in the fourth quarter and the year will end with a deficit. June's table count was below 400 tables for first time since April of 2020, when the club was closed for live play and online games were just being started. It is likely that the table count in the months of the last quarter will not increase significantly, if at all.

The club will likely end the fiscal year 2022 with an equity position in the range of \$75,000-\$80,000. It is entirely possible that in fiscal year 2023, the club's operating losses will continue and expand and may reach the \$30,000 range for the year. If so, the club's equity may end up below the \$50,000 mark, a benchmark that the Board has long considered one that it is not wise to go below.

A lengthy discussion followed the financial presentation where everyone at the meeting was asked to weigh in with their thoughts. A consensus was reached that it would be prudent to raise live game fees \$1 in the fall but not to raise online game fees. No vote was taken and continued discussion of this subject will take place at future board meetings. The fiscal impact of raising fees for live games was projected to be approximately \$12,000. The subject of raising dues was also discussed but no consensus was reached.

Club Manager Report:

Donna talked about the game schedule and that she and the directors were going to raise the Monday evening online game limit to 500 masterpoints from 300 in an effort to attract more participants. The Thursday evening online 0-750 is being eliminated. This game is doing poorly, was cancelled a couple of times in the last month because of insufficient participation and the players in this masterpoint range have numerous other options at the club for play.

Donna also discussed the possibility of another live open game returning on Monday. The hope is that the fall will bring increased participation with membership renewal, annual meeting and summer activities ceasing.

Donna stressed that we should continually be reminding folks that we are a member owned club and that when we communicate it would be helpful to refer people to the fact that it is "your club." Too many members are not invested sufficiently in the fact that it is their club.

Lease Committee:

Felix appointed Ben Bishop as head of a lease committee with Ben to form the rest of the committee with consultation with Felix and John Willoughby. The club's lease expires in November 2023 and at a current rate of approximately \$42,000 annually is the club's biggest fixed expense. Felix expressed the view that a thorough search for other possible venues, given the club's current and projected needs, is warranted both to explore whether there is a viable alternative to the current space and to be in the best position to negotiate with the owner of the property.

90th Anniversary Celebration/ Annual Meeting

The club had contracted with the Farmington Club in Farmington to hold the annual meeting and gala belated celebration of its 90th anniversary on October 23. A lengthy discussion of the prudence of going forward with this plan occurred. The board concluded that the uncertainties that continue to surround the Covid pandemic in addition to the financial risk involved in going forward with our commitment to the Farmington Club warranted yet another postponement until October 2023. The club has a \$1,000 deposit which it hopes to carry forward. The annual meeting is now planned to take place on October 23 at the club's facilities at 19A Andover Dr. Notice of the annual meeting will go out in early September with the notice of dues renewal. Payment of \$10 will be required for the game and accompanying meal at the club. The meal arrangements will be made once there is a better sense of attendance at the annual meeting. Donna noted that space will be limited at the club, and we may want to tell people that space will be limited and that they should get their reservations in promptly.

Nominating Committee

A discussion of potential candidates for the nominating committee occurred. Carole volunteered to be on the committee as a past president of the club. Trevor, as head of the committee, said he believed Bill Watson would be willing to serve as another past president. Several names of members who were not life masters were mentioned as candidates with the

caveat that persons on the nominating committee cannot be nominated for the board. The Board members suggested several names to Felix, who is empowered as president by the by-laws to select the nominating committee members. Felix passed on those names to Trevor who will approach those persons to see if they are willing to serve.

Treasurer Replacement Status

Trevor and John Dinius reviewed the status of the work they have been doing with Eric Vogel and Joanne Lloyd, the prospective candidates for treasurer and bookkeeper, to ensure that the transition will be smooth and Eric and Joanne will be knowledgeable about the club's current procedures. It was noted that the appointment of Eric as treasurer is a board officer appointment, which is subject to the nominating committee approval (and ultimately membership vote). Joanne attended the meeting and the board acknowledged that the club will be fortunate to have Joanne fulfill the role of bookkeeper that John Dinius has ably filled.

Educational Committee/Beginner Classes

Felix noted that due to the disruptions of the pandemic for the past several years he and Trevor have been administering the educational programs and that when they are both off the board come October 23, an educational committee needs to be formed and to undertake a robust educational program to the extent possible in keeping with the club's mission under its 501 (c)(3) status. Felix noted that he and Linda Starr would, as they have done in the past, undertake to teach two beginner classes starting on Saturday morning, September 10 and 17. A discussion ensued and the consensus was that these lessons be given for free as they have in the most recent past and that follow-up lessons as in the past would be given for a fee. The hope was that Laurie Robbins would also present another series of lessons on Shark bridge. It was noted that these lessons have been extremely popular and profitable for the club and that Laurie is a master teacher much appreciated by her students and by the board for all she does.

Victor King Memorial and Providence Nationals Report

Donna reported that many persons expressed their admiration for the club write-up and Victor King write-up. These appeared in Friday's Daily Bulletin at the Nationals on Victor King day. She also noted that the club's current charge of \$7 for live games is on the low end of charges for most of the clubs in the area and for those she talked with in the region.

Covid-19 Assessment

Several people at the club came down with the virus at the Providence Nationals. Donna noted that the co-chairs at the Nationals also came down with Covid. The directors have been suggesting that those that attended the Nationals wear masks at the club. Most have done so. The board will continue to monitor the degree of Covid's virulence and presence in the area as it has done for the past two years.

By-law Revisions

It was noted the revisions the board has passed need to be prepared for the annual meeting.

Planning Committee Report

John Willoughby, as chair of the committee, noted the committee's desire for continuation of the Swiss teams events on a monthly basis and the hope that a bracketed Swiss team event could take place soon. The discussion of the mentor program was postponed in Roger's absence. The committee will meet again shortly and will have other items to report.

Public Relations Initiatives

Debbie Bogatz has found it slow going in trying to get the club publicity. Felix noted that perhaps with the new round of beginner classes some outlets may be favorably disposed to give the club publicity. Debbie also thought it might be a good idea for the club to join Facebook. The value of this was unclear to the board in light of a superb website which few members visit. Debbie may visit the board in the future to describe the potential benefits of Facebook for the club.

Application to the Town of West Hartford for Grant and Property Tax Appeal

Trevor stated the Town has a fund from which it can grant up to \$10,000 to small businesses and non-profits like the club that have been damaged by Covid. Trevor said he is in the midst of preparing an application for the grant which application is due by August 5. While he thought it unlikely that the club would get \$10,000 it may get some money and there is no risk to applying. Similarly, Felix noted that he is prepared to try again to get the club property tax relief because most of the work has already been done and comparatively little effort is necessary to pursue an appeal this year.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 23 @1:30 p.m.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Felix Springer