

Minutes
AGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Sunday, September 27, 2009 – 8:00 PM EDT

Meeting called to order by: Roy Schmidt at 8:06 PM EDT

Type of meeting: Regular Monthly Conference Call

Attendees:

Jie Li (At Large)
Paul Celmer (Eastern Region)
Chuck Robbins (Eastern Region)
Roy Schmidt (Central Region) Chairman
Laura Kolb (Central Region)
Gordon Castanza (Western Region)
Andrew Okun (Western Region)
Allan Abramson (President)
Pauline Pohl (Secretary)

Absent:

None

1. **Approval of minutes**

Gordon Castanza made a motion to accept the minutes from the August 6, 2009 Board meeting. Andy Okun seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. **Election of Board Chair**

Celmer nominated Roy Schmidt
Castanza nominated Andy Okun

Castanza moved that nominations be closed
Okun seconded the motion to close nominations
Discussion: Okun said he was happy to step aside and have Roy continue as chair. Li asked if one of the nominees has more time to devote to the job. They both said they usually have enough time. Kolb suggested that since Okun seems more opinionated, maybe Roy would be better able to be unbiased.

Okun asked if it would be allowed that a chairman use his position to advance a point of view or position. Robbins said he thinks the chairman should be a facilitator.

Roll-call votes:

Jie Li- Okun

Paul Celmer - Schmidt

Chuck Robbins - Schmidt

Roy Schmidt - Schmidt

Laura Kolb - Schmidt

Gordon Castanza - Okun

Andrew Okun - Schmidt

Roy Schmidt is the Chairman by a vote of 5-2

3. **Call for additional agenda items**

Okun asked for the opportunity to talk about progress on a Los Angeles Congress (under new business)

4. **President's report**

- a. **Discussion: One year continuous membership policy**

Abramson asked the Board to discuss the following options for implementing the continuous membership policy for international representation.

Option A: Change youth membership expiration dates to the first of the month following their birthdays. Having AGA membership expire just after a birthday could make it easier for youth/parents to remember to renew their memberships on time.

Option B: Create a “youth-time” membership category. A one-time payment covering the years up to the 23rd birthday could be offered at a 20 or 25% discount to encourage participation.

Option C: Provide for a 30 day grace period after membership expiration. If renewal is received during this period, then membership would be deemed “continuous”.

Option D: Find out why some/many members have not been receiving the automated renewal reminders, and fix the problem. The expectation is for members to receive two or three electronic reminders prior to their expiration dates.

Option E: Add a check box to the website authorizing automatic membership renewal by credit card (this would apply to all forms of membership.)

Option F: Credit renewal dates from the date of postmark, tournament date if renewed at a tournament, or the date of electronic submittal, not the date of AGA processing. This would eliminate any breaks in membership due to AGA processing times.

Abramson said he is against having a grace period, but he would like to make some arrangements to help youth members keep their memberships current. He thinks Option B is attractive, because it will eliminate problems with youth members losing their eligibility to compete.

Robbins said he thinks membership changes need to be approved at the assembly level, but he likes the idea of Option B perhaps with a discounted rate for the extended period. Castanza also thinks this is a good approach. There was a general consensus that this is a good idea. Abramson said he will attempt to get this implemented before next summer.

Abramson asked if the Board is in favor of also making youth memberships renewed on the first of the month following their birthdays. Robbins suggested that Abramson should ask Sam Zimmerman whether that would be too much effort to implement before making any decision on that.

Abramson reported that the renewal notices have not been going out as usual because of the web site change. Robbins said that Jon Hilt was fixing this problem this week, and that reminders will go out 90, 60, and 30 days before expiration, and once after expiration.

Castanza asked how we would handle Option E, the automatic renewals if the credit card on file is past its expiration date. Abramson said an e-mail would go out reminding people to update their card information. Schmidt said he is concerned about securing the credit card information. Robbins said it would take a few days of programming to implement, but given enough time they could offer automatic credit card renewals.

Option F: Abramson is in favor of using postmark dates and tournament dates for crediting the renewal. Okun and Robbins also are in favor of that. It was noted that Phil Waldron was against adding to his workload in trying to determine dates of membership. Schmidt said it was an administrative issue and not a policy issue, and it would not result in any extra work for Waldron. He would simply go by the information Sam Zimmerman sends him to determine eligibility.

Okun said he would be in favor of allowing youth to renew even after a lapse without it affecting their eligibility to compete. Robbins said he thought we had allowed first time youth members to be exempt from the one-year

continuous membership. Abramson said he thought that was a special case and if we want to make that a permanent policy, it would have to be voted on. Abramson said he will contact Waldron to ask if he agrees that it worked out this year and will report back. If it worked out this year, Abramson will suggest waiving the one-year continuous membership for first-time youth members. Okun suggested voting through e-mail to speed up the process so we wouldn't have to wait for the next regular Board conference call.

b. Information item: Thank you note from None Redmond

Abramson relayed a message from None Redmond to the Board thanking them for their support of the Redmond Cup this year at the Congress.

c. Information item: Milton Bradley

Abramson has been having conversations with Milton Bradley about his book and about recognizing long term members. Bradley responded that he is frustrated and disappointed with the AGA for not wanting to recognize long term members with reduced or complimentary memberships. Abramson said he will share Bradley's e-mails with the Board for their consideration.

5. **Old Business**

a. **Continuous membership**

There was discussion of this at the last meeting. Schmidt said that the continuous membership policy is in effect unless there is a motion to change it. Okun said he continued to be against the continuous membership requirement but that, with the exception of the youth players where Allan was working on a change, it had been fully discussed at the last board meeting, and unless some other board members had modified their opinions, the question seemed closed as to adult members.

b. **Status reports**

i. **Congress MOA revision**

Abramson said there was an extensive e-mail exchange discussing the relationship between the AGA and the professionals. The Congress directors were concerned that if the AGA gets too involved, the budget could get out of control. Abramson said he would make clear that any requirements imposed by the AGA would have to be within the budget or the AGA would unilaterally pay the difference. Abramson said how the professional relationships are handled has a long-term effect on the AGA and needs to be addressed. Okun asked if the MOA would apply to the 2010 Congress and Abramson said absolutely yes. Okun is concerned that the organizers

may not appreciate the changes. Celmer wondered what would happen if the Congress organizers refuse to sign the MOA. Abramson said in the future the MOA should be signed a full year in advance. Abramson said he will circulate an updated MOA to the Board for their review.

ii. **Rank certificates**

Abramson said there have always been roadblocks in the way of providing rank certificates. The current issues are who is going to do the work and what algorithms will be used to determine ranks. Abramson said that we need an open source program so we can move forward in establishing the rank certification system. He said he hopes to make progress over the next month or so. Okun said this is an important issue to him.

Okun asked if there is an AGA policy on intellectual property. Robbins agreed that there should be a written policy. Robbins said that he thinks this should be included in the Congress MOA so that the future AGA store can sell items with various AGA logos, etc. Abramson said he would refer this item to the policy and governance committee.

Okun suggested that when we have established ranks for members we might offer colored belts. Abramson said he

likes the idea. Children especially would like them and the belts may help publicize go to non-players who know about the belt system.

6. **New business**

a. **Volunteer report cards**

Schmidt said this issue arose during discussions at the Congress where Chris Garlock said he makes sure volunteers are qualified. Celmer said a volunteer thank you system is needed more than a volunteer report card. Celmer said word of mouth recommendations are good for making sure volunteers are qualified, but he is more concerned about retaining good volunteers through recognition.

Schmidt said this is a delicate issue, because we don't want to discourage people from volunteering. Abramson said he agrees with Celmer that we need to positively reinforce our volunteers and encourage volunteering rather than discourage volunteers. He thinks we should not talk about report cards at this point because we don't have a surplus of volunteers.

Schmidt said report cards don't necessarily have to be negative. It is an opportunity to recognize volunteers in a positive manner. Abramson said he is in favor of encouraging volunteers and not doing anything to discourage them. Schmidt suggested a volunteer of the

year award. Abramson said he will look into some ways to recognize volunteers.

7. **2011 Los Angeles Congress**

Okun reported that Lisa Scott and Andrew Jackson flew out to Los Angeles and visited some possible venues for the 2011 Congress.

8. **Establish time and date of next meeting**

The next monthly conference call will be October 25, 2009 at 8:00 EDT.

9. **Adjourn**

Robbins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Okun seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:38 PM EDT.

Minutes submitted by Pauline Pohl, AGA Secretary