

AGA Board Meeting Minutes 7/27/2018 (Go Congress)

Attending:

Martin Lebl (Chair)
Andy Okun (AGA President)
Samantha Fede (AGA Secretary)
Lisa Scott
Gurujeet Khalsa
Paul Celmer (incoming At-large Representative)
Chris Kirschner
Edward Zhang
Steve Colburn (remote)
Russell Herman (Guest)
Terry Benson (AGF president)
Chris Saenz (remote, incoming western representative – joined briefly but had to leave)

Absent:

Andrew Jackson

Meeting called to order at 1:02pm EST

Chris motions to approve minutes, Steve seconds, unanimous. June meeting minutes approved.

President's report:

Will talk about the budget (next item).
Go Congress is proceeding, Lisa gives a report on future conferences.

Future congresses meeting summary from Lisa: Spoke to colorado folks about hosting 2020 Go Congress. Every 10 years Colorado hosts congress-- looking at Ft. Collins/Boulder. Boston people are interested in giving feedback on tournaments. Concerns about Madison congress (2019) were addressed. Edward asked a question about whether the venue has been established. Lisa says they're still looking at venues (for Colorado).

Chris: We need to prioritize dorms being accessible to the food and playing area, particularly if there's a topography reason (ie altitude).

Andy: Maybe we should add an item to the registration to indicate walking accessibility? So that closer dorms can be given to those who need to be closer or more accessibility.

Steve: This sounds like an issue for congress planning boards rather than us needing to talk about this now.

Edward: Should we get other bids for 2020?

Lisa: No, because it takes 2 years to plan a good congress and at this point, there's no one else who's prepared to bid for 2020 at the GA meeting tomorrow.

Edward: But I've heard people talking that lower attendance is because it's not in a big city. So we don't have a lot of west coasters here.

Andy: I do think that's something we should think about generally because people like to bring their families.

Lisa: But we actually have a similar number of players to Boston (which was 614), so the larger size is more about the number of non-players.

Gurujeet: We're also a few weeks earlier this year.

Paul: This is the lowest attendance in a while.

Lisa: Clarifies numbers for last 10 Congresses

[Chris Saenz joins the meeting remotely]

[Chris gives a brief introduction, but cannot stay on the call.]

Gurujeet: Another issue is that there were a large number of no-shows. We should make it less refundable.

Lisa: Well I think that in many cases these are people who didn't pay at all, so as congress liaison I need to emphasize that if people don't pay, assume they aren't coming.

Gurujeet: But the congress directors have to get a certain number of rooms and tshirts.

Lisa: No, if they don't pay, then they can't be guaranteed a room.

Gurujeet: I disagree.

Chris: I think this should be informed by data.

Lisa: Yes, and this isn't a board level issue, are there any other policy level issues?

Edward: Can we go back to talking about alternating big and small cities?

Andy: But it's really just about volunteers. These smaller places were where the people did the work and volunteered.

Edward: But I think people don't understand the volunteer process for bidding for go congress location. So they don't know how to host a congress.

Andy: Maybe can we run an EJ article about 2021.

Steve: At Go Congress every year there's a "So you want to run a go congress" meeting, and in the last 12 years of going to chapter meetings, no more than one group expresses serious interest.

Budget:

Martin: Okay, let's discuss the budget.

Andy: Okay, I have the budget such that the items are organized by type/event rather than revenue/expense. I wanted to make sure we had the budget for equipment for the broadcasting because it's so successful.

Lisa: We should also talk about better storage, and a computer for TDs to use at Congress.

Andy: Good idea, but they are not yet in the budget.

Martin: I think we should get bids rather than just guessing at amounts.

Andy: We're paying \$700/yr for storing go memorabilia in Chuck Robbin's closet and storing the archive (with Karoline Li).

Lisa: I'd also bring up the idea of doing a fulfillment center. I think Steve is working on it.

Andy: We also have to keep in mind that we have a very large reserve.

Lisa: I'd like \$1500-2000 to be allotted for more storage

Gurujeet: In fact I think we have too big of a reserve for an organization that doesn't have capital spending plans.

Steve: And I'll say we've been getting bids for great storage equipment. I've been working with Lisa. It should hold all our boards and stuff.

Lisa: The thing holding us back has been lack of a good inventory, but the equipment manager this year has been doing a great inventory

Andy: Revenue from investments and membership have gone up some.

Steve: Our server migration is mostly done on volunteer power but not much. I'd like the budget item to be doubled for this year. We're looking at some yearly costs to keep things running.

Edward: What about the app, Gurujeet?

Gurujeet: It's been great and we've had great feedback. It's much cheaper than a standard 3rd party app.

Lisa: Have we investigated other app options? Mish was developing one.

Gurujeet: But there are some technical problems because then you need to submit content updates through apple or wherever.

Steve: I don't think that's true. Content isn't the same as updating the software.

Lisa: I do think that an app is generally a good idea, but I have heard some complaints about it. Maybe we can make improvements through Yapp or elsewhere. We need to investigate more.

Gurujeet: I strongly advise against us programming our own app.
[*post hoc clarification from G.K.:* I strongly advise against writing an app from scratch.]

Martin: Particularly, I don't think we can pay 15k for that.

Lisa: But I think we have volunteers who would do it for us.

Chris: Gurujeet, how many hours did you spend on this app?

Gurujeet: It wasn't hard to learn.

Chris: Aren't we just duplicating our effort for handbooks with the app?

Gurujeet: Well there are things we could have done it better. We didn't advertise some of the capabilities.

Steve: Maybe we could do this app support outside of the congress team, and the congress team could provide relevant info.

Lisa: Like the webmaster.

Andy: Well this arose from wanting the budget line item for an app. I went ahead and added it. We're at 0.

Chris: Should this be a congress item or an aga item?

Andy: Another issue is the item for congress budget support in general. I support that, do we want to keep it? [Yes] We also have an item for a pro tournament, maybe in the fall (for prize money). We should also do another pro qualifier.

Edward: What is the money for the pro section for?

Andy: Supporting AGA pro travel and travel for AGA broadcasters to pro events.

Edward: What is the sponsorship item? Is that confirmed?

Andy: I'm working on it.

Edward: Why is most of the money going towards strong players rather than weak players? Most of the kids wanting to play aren't at that level. And we need more people promoting (i.e., teaching). How do we as the board feel about this? We should support strong players and teaching equally.

Martin: Most of our teaching activities are through AGF, which was their mission first, and have funds specifically for that purpose.

Lisa: Minting new professionals is very important to AGA members, regardless of strength.

Andy: It's entertainment, inspiration [Lisa: And honor]

Martin: That was our motivation for implementing the system.

Andy: We've explicitly tried to use the money we have to promote go activities, and it's not that easy. We have the chapter rewards program, but it's small. They're not using the money that's allotted for it.

Lisa: Is the state championship budgeted in there?

Andy: It's small, but we do need to put it in there.

Edward: Big states should get more money than small states

Chris: We have 6 states interested, hopefully more after tomorrow.

Andy: I'm budgeting \$2000 this year for the state tournament. I would be happy to spend money on non-pro activities, we can keep adding to that. But, we have the money, there's no point in limiting pro spending, since all the resources aren't being used anyway.

[cross-talk]

Lisa: And we put a lot of resources into Congress, which is for the general player. But it's mostly volunteer so we don't see it in the budget, but we'd probably pay 250k for it.

Gurujeet: I don't want to just throw money at problems, but I want good ideas.

Steve: Maybe we can support pros (who are already doing it) to run teaching videos to do both things.

Gurujeet: We can't depend on the AGF for funding.

Chris: But the AGF wants more projects, there just needs to be collaborations given that we have different tax/non-profit statuses.

Edward: I think we should add a line item for teaching workshops and volunteers and promoting them.

Lisa: I don't support that without the volunteer/manpower set up to support it.

Andy: We've been trying to do this, and it hasn't really worked.

Chris: We had two education coordinators, and they flaked. I am working on getting volunteers for education related things. We aren't there yet.

Andy: We can always revise the budget later if this develops. I'm sending out the current form of the budget now.

Chris: I move to accept the budget as revised, Gurujeet seconds. Unanimous, budget passed.

Discussion of investment policy:

Andy: I believe we're in agreement that investing our funds is good, but that the board isn't ready to approve anything. We discussed two options in the past, but a third option was presented to me: going with the do it yourself, like a vanguard account. And I know that may be the best option (to not have a professional) from a math perspective, but I'd go against it. The reason is that I think that while some people could manage the money themselves (like myself and maybe other board members), I don't think that's necessarily the case.

Chris: If we go with an advisor, can we ask the person to stay conservative or aggressive?
[Andy: Yes]. If we have the opportunity to get an advisor for a good rate, I support it.

[Terry Benson joins as guest]

Andy: Note the AGF has been managing investments well for some time.

Gurujeet: We're just looking for someone to swipe index funds for us, so I don't know why we would pay someone to do something we could do ourselves. James Pinkerton among others has been discussing that with us.

Martin: I think that's Warren Buffet's advice. But the other side of it is the legal perspective. We have more coverage if someone else manages our money.

Andy: Although I don't know if we'll be sued, another thing to consider is that the investment will be removed from the particulars of board politics, and it improves the professionalization of the organization.

Lisa: I like that we can move away from volunteer hours on this.

Martin: So the question is how much the professionalization/intangible benefits are worth compared to the .3% rate.

Andy: It's about \$800/yr. We're planning to invest about half of our non-congress reserve, but we may end up with more funds as we grow, which means that percentage is a higher amount. But I can also ask questions about what sort of funds they'd put us in and what fees there might be.

Terry: AGF funds are mostly in Fidelity. Another chunk is in a different fund. We don't manage it actively. I just like things in index funds. When index funds take a hit, managed funds also take hits, so I think that's my opinion personally and for the AGF

Edward: I agree that the index is great, but if the market crashes we'll likely lose a lot and the advisor will tell you to wait and gain money back or take the loss. We also need to think about the succession of the business. If in the future we don't have expertise, or if a disgruntled member complains, there may be an issue. And we do have fiduciary responsibility to treat our organization's money correctly.

Martin: Most non-profits just aim to preserve funds. If we pick some basic indexes, it's a well established rule that if we made best-effort attempts, we're not open to legal responsibility.

Andy: The same issue could be said for our lack of professional accounting.

Terry: I strongly advise you have professional outside accounting.

[All agree this is a different issue to be discussed]

[Andy lists investments that were in the proposal.]

Martin: Board will look into it and discuss this at next meeting.

Terry: We should discuss how the AGF can take some budget burden away from AGA.

Gurujeet: There was a paypal issue the week before congress.

Steve: Summary of problem- there was some old code that was not compatible with paypal servers that caused some problems with payments going through with memberships (double paying, not going through). I went to the programmer and we figured out what the problem was at our go club. In the next couple of days, I spent time building a new server and updating the code to fix these programs. But because this is a volunteer organization, we're working on it but our volunteers are busy with work and should be working on it soon. As soon as our volunteer says the new code is ready to go, we can shut off the old version and migrate to the new server. But it's somewhat tedious.

Andy: I have a question. When the problem was happening, I made the payment through paypal but then I received a message from our website saying that there was a problem. I think that causes concern that we don't know about the issue. Can you change the message?

Steve: Time working on that will be taken away from time fixing the issue. I can look into it though. There was also a message in the ejournal.

Andy: Charles also said that money should be refunded (for double membership payments) rather than crediting a year. I agree.

Steve: Charles is working on this. Lisa, do you know how many people this affects?

Lisa: Maybe 14? Most of them have been contacted.

Andy: A little more than that, but not many.

Gurujeet: I understand this is a volunteer organization, but I am not inspired by this report. We should pay someone to maintain our software monthly. It took several years for us to add fields to our website. We have an unmaintainable system and now it's broken at congress.

[*post hoc clarification from G.K.: We should pay for a commercial off-the-shelf membership system instead of trying to maintain a home-grown system.*]

Chris: I think we should add this to the agenda for next meeting. [Chris has to leave]

[Executive session regarding Martin Lebl continuing as chair]

Board agrees to have Martin continue to serve as chair.

Discussion of next meeting time: August 26th, tentatively.

Lisa moves to adjourn at 2:56pm. Steve seconds. Unanimous approval. Meeting adjourned.