

AGA Board Meeting
4/23/2017

Present:

Gurujeet Khalsa (Chair, Eastern Region Representative)

Chris Kirschner (Western Region Representative)

Andrew Jackson (Western Region Representative)

Lisa Scott (Central Region Representative)

Diego Pierrottet (Eastern Region Representative)

Edward Zhang (At-Large Representative)

Martin Lebl (Central Region Representative)

Andy Okun (President)

Bob Gilman (Executive Vice President)

[connectivity issues for many participants]

BG: I haven't seen the budget yet

GK: Ok, Andy, could you give a high level overview of the budget and then Chris want to brief us on the ranking program, and then we'll close with the Code of Conduct

AO: [sends bob the budget] I sent out a little while ago the draft budget for the year starting at beginning of June. Two high-level things to note: 1st, i decided not to budget for spending on the congress escrows. It's [indiscernible] and set aside for the purpose. I'm not trying to predict that. In cash accounting terms it's part of our revenue and expenses, but i thought it'd be confusing to try and add it. The other is that i put \$15k in spending from our reserves, which is the money we got from google. That causes the non-discretionary spending to seem to be in the whole, but it's due to the characterization of our money from google going directly into the reserves as we're a cash-basis organization. Per talking with Roy, we should not be trying to have reserves

The other thing in there is we're deciding to continue to spend money on US Open Masters prizes. There's one other item that doesn't matter a lot in terms of the net but which is very different than prior years, which is the Cotsen foundation via the Stoleroff foundation is now not on our books.

That's the main things to keep in mind.

BG: Question: we had some back & forth about equipment purchases, i assume it's not in there..

AO: It isn't, i can put it in there

BG: would it make a big difference?

AO: if i recall our conversation correctly than the scale we're discussing it is not a big deal

Another thing is our scope on the spending for chapter rewards. We don't have a large uptake on our chapter rewards.

CK: We need to keep that as a potential expected expense, i.e. carry it as a liability

GK: other questions comments?

AJ: I haven't had a chance to look at it yet.

CK: Same

GK: Ok, it's out there to study, send andy your questions and copy everyone. Other presidents report items?

AO: nothing at this time

GK: Chris, comments on the rank certification:

CK: Sent it out, got some comments mostly favorable. One major question was the starting point: 2010. We could move that up if we wanted and it would probably not make a huge difference, only a ten percent [unintelligible]

AJ: There are major unanswered questions here: what is this doing? What algorithm is there? What is it doing? When we talk about a ten percent change, ten percent of what? It's hard for me to assess what this is doing when there is no documentation as to its intended function. I have strong reservations about the deployment plan and the plan for creating a new position: ranking coordinator -- for whom we have a committed volunteer for only one year. What is the plan for after one year?

AO: Some of this was discussed at a board meeting before you were on the board

AJ: That may be true, but there needs to be a lot more documentation. I made my initial assessment on what i could see but it seems that the algorithm has gone far beyond an easily explained summary of what it is doing.

CK: Jon responded to your email and I thought he answered a lot of your questions.

AJ: He answered some of them, but none about the actual algorithm. There are also issues of who will own the copyright.

CK: This may be something that we should discuss with Jon present.

CK: There's a lot of detail in this information exchange, and a board meeting may not be the right forum for it.

GK: The algorithm based on the top three in your bracket. I liked this because it was clear

CK: Yes, it was clear.

GK: We need something that people can relate to or understand, and I thought we were getting there, but have we now, in tweaking this, gotten it to something that the average person won't really understand. Is this something that the average person can understand?

CK: Short answer, no. This is based on the rating system, which has the same problem. You basically need a math degree to understand the rating algorithm, and these two systems need to be intimately related.

It analyzes successive series of 6 games, looks at the ratings of the players involved, analyzes the probable outcomes, and if your performance is in the middle of the rank you're looking for, you get that rank because you're likely to stay there.

GK: I'm assuming on good faith the statistical validity, but it feels like we've gotten away from the simplicity we're striving for. We have a rating system that people complained about because they don't understand it, and we might have a second system here that will receive complaints because they don't understand

CK: i don't have a good answer for that, this system is based on the existing rating system

AJ: About a year ago, I presented to the board a proposal to address a lot of the issues that the rating system has. The board suggested forming an independent committee that would look at these results. Does Jon's new system make it easier to address these issues? For example, evaluating sigma changes in the context of these rankings?

CK: This may be over my head. Jon and I have both looked at the issues that you bring up and agree 100% that these issues need to be addressed. People with a low sigma are penalized when it comes to advancement.

AJ: The sigma parameter was not created scientifically, it was a best guess estimate from a very different group of data 20 years ago.

CK: The ranking system is not exempt from the rating system. The ranking system will fit comfortably into a revised rating system

GK: For me the comment is that I thought we'd started down this path looking for a second algorithm that would be comprehensible, but this seems to have gone away from that.

CK: Let me come back to where we began, which is that we are perfectly ready to look at any algorithm provided to us, and evaluate that. Jon believes that he can program a simple algorithm in with little difficulty.

AJ: Can we see the white papers that Jon mentioned?

CK: no problem

AO: Can i interject? Can we stay focused on what particular exercise this program is about. This is about giving us a confidence for sending our members something that says "congratulations, you're a 2-dan". My own preference would be to hand them out like candy. I was not successful in making that argument and maybe i shouldn't've been. As the board has made plain, this needed to be more rigorous than that. What we have looked for after that is reasons why it is acceptable to give someone a promotion for what is an honorary rank. Your rating goes down, your rank does not. This algorithm, that we discussed -- i think in some depth, right when Jon was starting this project? -- is, it seems to be, a plausible way of doing that. It does not, as Chris says, address

AJ: Can I jump in? That drives at my main comment of what was presented so far. What we have is an excellent technical solution, but no plan for how this fits into the creation of those certificates. Would the ranking program be administered by the ranking coordinator, who would use it to issue certificates? Would it be visible via a page on usgo.org? This is a crystallization of the mathematics, but has no answers into how we'll actually be putting those certificates into members hands. Who will do it? How will they use it? Will it be visible to our members? If not, we have no need to try and explain the UI or the drop in rank...

LS: The impression I've been left with from the last 5 years or so is that, although it would of course be based on an algorithm, you would essentially get a rank certificate if you've held your rank for a year (having been active for that year). We seem to have gone very far away from that idea with this new algorithm

EZ: The part about distribution could be addressed with an online order form similar to the kinds of services that already exist. I ordered some posters for my office and their charges are very reasonable. My second point is that we have a few new board members and there are certainly some projects covered. I suggest we consider using a google drive to provide a central location for these long-running projects documentation so that future board members can review.

BG: Whatever we finally decide to do, i think it's important that full documentation be put together that can be accessed and maintained, which relates both to the inner workings of the

calculations and also to the mechanics of sending out certificates on the other. It's my feeling in general that our documentation of what we do is dispersed to a degree that makes it difficult to follow what actually transpired down the line.

GK: what do you suggest next steps, CK?

CK: That we terminate this discussion. Every comment that has been made was requested by e-mail a few weeks ago, and this is not an appropriate spot. When it is asked and the questionee is not given access to the floor for five minutes it is not a productive conversation. He has made distribution modules and they'll be a part of the package

GK: I would like to hear about the distribution. It was asked and it is a legitimate question.

CK: he has written a module that does that. Is that not a sufficient answer.

AJ: That answer is not sufficient because we have no idea what it does. What we were shown was our previous games with a new set of numbers, but we have no idea what the rest of the system is supposed to do -- who will see these? How do we communicate this system to the membership? There is a 'distribution module' that was not seen or demonstrated.

There is a module that does distribution of certificates. Is it automatic, does it use a distribution company? Who uses it?

CK: The module will distribute on an automated basis.

GK: I agree we should move on. There is a request for knowing how it would be distributed. There were requests from myself and Lisa for something more explainable.

AJ: Again, i am highly encouraging and very impressed by the work seen so far, but i have trouble without more context around how this is going to integrate with our existing organizations processes.

GK: Next we would like to talk about the Code of Conduct and the documents distributed by Lisa and Chris. It might good if one or both of you would summarize the changes of direction from what we discussed earlier.

CK: Lisa started this and wrote the original document (along with Karoline and Susanna). I supplemented it. We are both interested in seeing this implemented at this go congress. I have done some searching for training we can obtain at the go congress for a reasonable cost, so that we have leaders who are well-educated as to how to support

LS: there were changes made according to the feedback we recieved. It no longer conflicts with the tournament regulations (it didn't before, but it's clearer now). Some things were changed, some things were moved from the consequences to the documents that Chris has been putting together. However, this still addresses the main issues of conduct that occur at the Congress are addressed.

GK: Let's open this up Questions or comments?

AJ: I think it looks great.

GK: I still have some of the same reservations i have before, i'll restate them: one is a technicality: I'm still not clear from the definition in there and i read back down into the appendix on 'AGA sponsored events' about what they mean...

LS: this is defined in the tournament regulations specifically, e.g. the pro tournament or any tournament put on specifically by the AGA.

AO: Resolving the hesitation I have is not to change what is, but to address what isn't

LS: I think that that is already there, but if it's not we should make sure that it is. This is only in obligatory effect for AGA sponsored, run events, but we encourage them to use it if they would like to.

AO: Great, if we have a line like that i think it will clarify the question that people will have.

CK: Chapters can use it if they want. I think that's fine as far it goes, but when they choose to use it they need to know we're involved [e.g. in enforcement]

ML: Somehow they would need to be able to talk to the AGA leadership to get these processes started.

AO: Is that a business we want to be in?

KL: That's the question.

BG: The code has an enforcement part, and it needs to be clear whether the AGA Code of Conduct, if they chapter chooses to use

CK: That's the question, especially since we have had an instance where we have received a request along these lines. I would suggest that we be able to handle requests from everyone.

LS: True for chapters and members

BG: If they adopt, they need to understand they re adopting the consequences

LS: True. The code is pretty short and consequences are an integral part of that, but we should make it clear

GK: Working for a giant corporation that takes this seriously, There are good things in there about training and advice, but my sense is that we haven't developed the muscle for this yet.

LS: I actually do think we have most of this.

GK: Let me finish. The difference between the committee of 5-9 people and where I work is that where I work, people can get fired if they don't maintain privacy (examples).

We have a lot of trouble getting 5-9 trained volunteers to show up consistently, let alone what we would do if they violated privacy...

CK: The policy and procedure document is trying to address exactly that. We do not need to do it at the level of a large company, but we do need to address the privacy concerns and get the training.

ML: How do we select these people? Getting people who want to enforce this, I'm not super excited about.

LS: there are already 5-9 people [lists]. These aren't people who are like yes, i want to bring the hammer down, it's about wanting to make sure that everyone is in a safe and comfortable environment, and that people feel like they can be safe and comfortable and want to come back.

DP: My concerns are still there. These seem to be cosmetic changes. To actually implement this document, you'd have to have people know what these codes are. It may appear trivial but i think the way it's formatted is counterproductive -- can anyone say without looking what the ten commandments here are?

CK: sorry, what's counterproductive?

DP: the way it's written out right now, there are very specific conducts right now that are or aren't prioritized. Maybe minor or different conducts might not be able to be brought up here...

LS: can you clarify with an example? Is there a part of this where you think implementing it, some part of the code that is particularly opaque? That would be helpful

DP: Well, i submitted all my comments already and it seems like they weren't considered. What we have now is pretty much what we started with.

GK: I did have the comment the first time... i dont' know the whole history, but it seemed like we were starting at the point of sexual harassment issues that actually grew into conduct, but actually seemed to trivialize the larger issues by lumping it in with kibitzing, etc.

LS: i'd like to disagree with you

GK: ... it feels like it goes too far, too deep, like someone could get a written report for kibitzing on a casual game...

LS: that's why the first level is a verbal warning. This is a real problem, having people walk up and butt in can make our events an uncomfortable environment for a lot of people.

CK: [unintelligible] The issues we're dealing with here have the same difficulties of clarification. Everything gets done by the judgement of a ... The verbal warnings don't get publicly documented, at all, and even the written warnings remain confidential.

[I'm losing a lot of what he's saying here.]

The inability to define a lot of these things appears on every level.

GK: I think we're overdefining some things that almost to me trivialize some of the really big things we're trying to deal.

LS: Can you give an example? [he did, kibitzing on casual's]

GK: Two teenagers making a lot of noise, you ask them to be quiet and they don't ... I think we're going too far in having official warnings for that

This feels more like policing than it does in ensuring there's a warm & comfortable environment.

CK: I think we can work on that

GK: I think for enforcement our organization really needs to develop the capacities to e.g. build a secure system, train volunteers, keep things private, etc. But we don't really have that today, we don't have paid staff who would face any consequences if they revealed confidentiality, etc.

AO: Indeed, but we have to build it up anyway if we're going to have this.

GK: I would say let's first start with stating what we expect of people. We've never stated that

AO: True, we've never stated it like this, only in the context of the tournament games. The point that's been made is that if you have the code, you have to get into building up that process. Is there something specific about the process document that you're concerned about?

GK: I don't think that we're in a position to be able to make the statements that we're making about the Code by the Congress. We're not at that point, and we need to get there.

AJ: I think Gurujeet's point about the capacities and limitations of our organization are well taken. It's hard to mandate the norms without punishment. But what if we did – what if we just listed the code and not the consequences. **Then we haven't fenced ourselves in ...**

LS: Expectations, implement 2018 [sounds good-ish to me? dunno]

GK: go further than that, say this is our expectations of people who come, make it a positive statement. Say the president, the AGA, reserves the right to exclude, ban people at their discretion but leave it vague enough for people to know there can be consequences...

LS: That sounds way thornier, authoritarian.

GK: Just let people know that there can be consequences.

AO: I would take the position that someone running these events, or me if I'm there, inherently has the right to do some enforcement. This is only within the bounds of our activities – whether someone can participate or not. Not having a process laid out means that people could feel aggrieved, but we are also not constrained to something published. Let's say we have a committee of 3 people, could they decide? I think they could.

AJ: ...constrained to something that we can't live up to...

AO: Say our committee only has 3 people, could they eject someone? I would think so...

EZ: This is Edward, can i make a quick comment? Maybe it is not appropriate in this situation... but i think perhaps the chess people have faced this issue many years before, they might have something setup and we could use their resources and manpower. I.e., a third-party service that we could use, rely on their independence, etc.

CK: I have a comment at this point. We are now in the details of how and whether or not we have the capacity to do this. This is really administrative, not board. Putting a program like this in place is non-trivial. I think the president can say we don't have it and it can throw off the whole deal. We could also ask the president to put together something more detailed to be

presented at the next board meeting. If the administration feels that it has the training it takes to implement, etc., then we can go forward with it.

GK: i would modify that -- i think what andrew was suggesting and lisa's response, it sounds like there's general agreement that we can go ahead with establishing the code of conduct and getting that out to our members. And we should continue pursuing this piece as well, and there's agreement that we can and should do that.

LS: Can we move to instruct the president to move forward in publishing a code of conduct with the consequences unspecified?

BG: I think we can go ahead and say that we have a code of conduct that defines expectations and the enforcement piece is not defined yet, but i disagree that the enforcement is strictly administrative. I would also suggest that the privacy of the enforcement part is critical.

CK: Yes, but the development of the policy should be handed over to the administration since the Board as a Board does not seem to work between board meetings.

GK: I would like to have the board agree on the language for the code of conduct.

AJ: Gurujeet, can you take control of making this happen before the next board meeting?

BG: Needs to happen quickly

AJ: Don't we need to at least allude to consequences according to the best judgement of some senior officer of the AGA?

LS: if folks are at a computer we can certainly all look at the current language and approve it right now.

AJ: Ok, so can we agree on it? GK, can you agree to get everyone to agree?

LS: do we have a majority? Can i get a straw poll?

AJ: i'm very comfortable with this list, even more so if the consequences are less defined and more left to the judgement of the senior officers.

CK: some recording mechanism is required to let our members appreciate our seriousness, without it, our membership will not receive it well.

GK: I disagree. We have not set these expectations and setting them for the first time is the platform on which we build.

LS: others we haven't heard from? Martin?

ML: I would agree that we are lumping some minor violations with very serious ones. Putting them on the same level with bringing food & drink where they're not allowed seems like they shouldn't really be in the same document as sexual harassment, denigrating people by race, stuff where we really have to take a hard line. We don't need reporting procedures for food & drink but we really need it for serious stuff...

LS: Great, it says 'attendees must follow all posted rules, including but not limited to food and drink' we can take away the 'included but not limited to' part and just make it clear that they should follow the posted rules of our environment. [makes changes]

AO: You make reference to the tournament regulations, perhaps #9 isn't necessary?

LS: i thought we wanted that, so i added it in.

CK: I would like to make a motion. I would like the board to be involved in editing these documents over the next 2-3 weeks and the results of that editing be presented at the next meeting, up or down. Doing this in a board document is not acceptable

LS: I'm worried it won't actually happen.

GK: we've given feedback, can you just turn it around and get it back to us?

LS: i'm not clear what i was expected to do... [details] other than excerpt these two pages. Are there more concrete instructions?

GK: ok, then excerpt those two pages and send it out for comments w/in the next few weeks. People have three weeks to do it. Make your edits, we'll have a limited amount of time in the next few weeks.

LS: i'll send this out by 8:30. Block out some time to work on it, folks, i'll get it out ASAP. I can't help you before then.

CK: does this include policies and practices?

LS: just the code of conduct and the minor changes discussed above.

CK: i ahve some concern taht we're going to wind up publishing something with nothing behind it. I cannot go on wi9th that it's just not appropriate in my mind.

GK: i've heard several people say this is an appropriate approach, i haven't heard others say it's inappropriate...

LS: i don't love it but it's better than not having a code at all.

CK: i think havign a code with no reporting and no training is worse than not having one.

GK: ok let's wrap it up.

LS: hold on, next board meeting?

ML: wait, what about the budget?

GK: not enough people have read it to approve it tonight.

ML: oh, ok.

LS: 21st? Week before is Mother's day.

AJ: no good, 23rd is alphago's next match.

LS: ok, Monday, may 15th?

Next Board Meeting set for Monday, May 15 at 8pm EDT.

LS: Moves we adjourn

AJ: seconds

In favor: all

Meeting adjourns 9:30pm EDT.

Check the bolded parts