

AGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Sunday, January 25, 2009 – 8:00 PM EST

The meeting was called to order at 8:07 by Roy Schmidt.

Type of meeting: Regular monthly conference call

Attendees:

Jie Li (At Large)

Chuck Robbins (Eastern Region)

Celmer (Eastern Region)

Laura Kolb (Central Region)

Roy Schmidt (Central Region) Chairman

Willard Haynes (Western Region)

Andrew Okun (Western Region) arrived 8:25 PM

Allan Abramson (President)

Pauline Pohl (Secretary)

1. Approval of minutes for December 14, 2008 meeting

Willard Haynes made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2008 Board conference call. Chuck Robbins seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

2. Call for additional agenda items

No items were added to the agenda.

3. President's Report

a. **Policy Decision Request- Policy and Procedures for Selection of Representatives for International Tournaments**

Jie Li invited Feng Yun to join the meeting to give her opinion on the proposed policy. She said she likes most of the rules. Over the past years the rules have helped to formalize selection criteria except for the problems with the Fujitsu last year. She likes the 6 month residency rule, but doesn't agree with the two tournaments per year rule, because it is hard to follow the rule. It is almost impossible to predict because new tournaments arise and it's hard to choose which to compete in. She thinks that representation will naturally even out and the rule is unnecessary. Whoever wins a qualification tournament should go to the tournament regardless of how many tournaments they win. It's complicated to figure out which tournaments are covered by the two tournament rule. Are women's tournaments included? Paid tournaments? The reason is so that one

player is not the only one to represent the country, but that hasn't been happening, so the rule is unnecessary.

Paul Celmer asked whether Feng Yun has discussed her views with other professionals. She said yes at the Congress in Portland she did and Janice Kim agreed with her.

There were no more questions for Ms. Feng and she left the conference call.

Haynes commented that Feng Yun seems to agree with the six month residency requirement that is stated in the draft document, and the only major disagreement was with the two tournaments per year limit. He agreed with her arguments that this limit is unnecessarily confusing and difficult to administer. It may not make sense to continue the two tournament rule. Kolb asked if last year was the first time a player qualified for more than two tournaments. Abramson said yes, as far as he knows it hadn't occurred before.

Celmer said he wonders if the other pros agree with her that the two tournament rule is unnecessary. Abramson said all of the pros seem to be of the opinion that whoever wins the qualifying tournament should represent the U.S. in the tournament. Haynes said all the professionals he has spoken with have expressed the view that there should be no limit and the strongest player should always represent the U.S.

Abramson said he was Chairman when the policy was developed with the intent of promoting diversity, but now after thinking about it a lot, it may be wise to give up the rule and acknowledge that the pros have been unhappy with the rule. The new Board has reviewed the situation, and their opinions have changed. Five years ago, the policy was made to include strong amateurs in qualification tournaments. Originally the pros didn't like the inclusion of amateurs, but they have adjusted and nobody complains about that any more. The residency requirement also has been widely accepted. The only feature that remains controversial is the two tournament rule.

Robbins asked how the other Board members feel about diversity in general and the rule in particular. Okun said he's okay without diversity. Celmer said he also could vote for eliminating the two tournament rule. The rule created problems without solving any problems. Kolb said she is in favor of diversity in theory, but she may vote against the rule for practical reasons. Celmer said before a change is made, Phil Waldron should be consulted.

Abramson said he doesn't want to change the policy simply to avoid controversy, but since the Board membership has changed, if their views have changed he supports removing the restriction. Robbins said he was always in favor of diversity, but after the nastiness of the past year, he would consider changing his view. Jie Li said he thinks the rule complicates things unnecessarily. Abramson said he gets the idea the Board may be leaning toward removing the restriction as long as Waldron has input. Abramson said he will consult Waldron and the discussion will resume next Board meeting.

b. Policy Discussion-Lifetime Memberships

Abramson suggested rewarding long-term members with lifetime membership. Robbins said he objects to the concept, because life members put up a lot of money up front and he doesn't like the idea of discouraging people from paying the fee for life membership. Willard Haynes and Roy Schmidt agreed with Robbins. Robbins suggested offering a lower rate for members with long-term membership as a compromise. Schmidt suggested offering a life membership with a payment plan of \$100/year for 15 years as a compromise to the \$1000 up-front usual cost of a life membership. Celmer liked the idea of a percentage reduction based on years of membership. Abramson said he was thinking of this idea as a plan to keep members rejoining year after year rather than as a threat to revenue stream. Haynes suggested lowering the life member rate based on a person's age. Robbins said he thinks we have mishandled our life members. He thinks we should give them more benefits and recognition than we are doing. Rather than reducing the rate we should take notice of the life members in the yearbook and on the web site. He thinks that's more important than reducing the price. Abramson said he plans a section on the web site to recognize life members, and Mike Lash has already been giving life members special pins.

Robbins suggested that when the web store is started members should get a coupon worth the same percentage as their years of membership off at the web store. Abramson said he would look up the demographics and get specifics about what might happen to the revenue stream if a lot of long-term members took advantage of special pricing of a life membership.

c. FYI- Internet qualifier ratings

Abramson spoke with Paul Matthews and he said he could enter internet games into the ratings system as long as they are "flagged" to study whether they significantly affect ratings. For starters, he would only include serious games from internet qualifier tournaments. Okun asked if the internet games could be applied to the ten-game requirement. Abramson said no. The 10-game policy was made to encourage face to face games. Jie Li said he is opposed to the ten game rule, because professionals are exempt. It is hard for the amateurs to meet the limit without professionals having the same requirement. Okun said he didn't mean to raise a new issue and he has no problem with the internet games being rated.

d. FYI- Web site hosting contract

Abramson said the web site has been migrated back to where we started from. There is a new look, but it is still evolving.

e. FYI-Membership Card Lamination

Abramson did some price checks. The cheapest rate at Staples or Kinko's is about \$.15 each if done on a sheet and separated by the store. If they are done individually, it would cost \$.35 each. Abramson said it might be best to issue one membership card without an expiration date rather than reissuing a card each year. An alternative would

be to issue stickers every year. The cheapest alternative would be to issue cards once to every existing member and issue cards to new members in batches.

Robbins said he has heard of a machine that spits out real plastic cards that costs less than \$1000. Abramson said he would do more study and report back next meeting.

f. FYI-Prize Money Data

Abramson said he is still working on his analysis and will report more next time.

End of President's report. (9:25PM)

4. Old Business

a. Revision of selection procedures for international representatives

Some of this issue was discussed under the President's report, but Schmidt said the representation policy is separate. He asked if there were any objections to the circulated proposed policy. Schmidt said this is not a policy, but a procedure, so no official vote is necessary. Abramson said he changed statement #2 to say the representative must reside in the U.S. for "at least six months".

b. Membership Card upgrade

Covered under President's report.

5. New Business

a. Ing funding

Robbins asked Abramson to research whether the Ing Foundation has made any contributions to the AGA over the past year and if not, why. Abramson said there have been some payments, but others have not been received. Abramson is working with Treasurer Adam Bridges to research whether there is a problem.

b. Rank Certification

Okun asked if we should revisit the rank certificate issue in next month's meeting. Abramson said the problem so far is a lack of volunteers to do the work.

6. Establish time and date for next Board meeting

The next regular monthly conference call will occur on February 22, 2009 at 7:00 EST. (This is one hour earlier than usual to accommodate Okun.)

7. Adjourn

Okun made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Robbins seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to adjourn at 9:34 EST.

Submitted by Pauline Pohl, AGA Secretary