

Minutes
AGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Thursday, August 6, 2009 – 1:30 PM EDT

Meeting called to order by: Roy Schmidt at 1:40 PM EDT
Type of meeting: Annual Congress Board Meeting

Attendees:

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

Gordon Castanza (Western Region board member-elect)
Steve Colburn (Webmaster)
Terry Benson (AGF President)
Chris Sira
Phil Waldron
Matt Mallory
Chris Garlock
Andrew Jackson
Lisa Scott
Karen Jordan
Keith Arnold
Paul Barchilon
John Hogan
Marianne Paulhamous
Chris Kirschner

Absent:
none

1. Approval of minutes

Willard Haynes made a motion to accept the minutes from the June 14, 2009 Board meeting. Chuck Robbins seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Call For New Agenda Items

Andrew Okun asked to add an item: Continuous membership

3. Board election results

Kolb was re-elected, Celmer was re-elected, and Castanza was elected again after a one-year absence. Schmidt thanked Willard Haynes for his service and congratulated Castanza on his election.

4. President's Report

Allan Abramson presented his monthly report:

a) Discussion: Volunteers

How to get them and how to retain them based upon Andy Okun's recommended book. Andy has been promoting board discussion on how to attract and retain members.

Abramson said he thinks we need more volunteers so we can do more as an organization. Okun said the book discusses the idea of recruitment. When we are lucky people seek us out to volunteer, but otherwise we need to recruit volunteers. Okun said there is a structural problem because clubs are not organizationally part of the AGA, so club members are not likely to be drawn into the AGA organization. Some people in the AGA have been actively recruiting helpers, for example Chris Garlock and Phil Waldron. The rest of us need to learn from them.

Garlock said he'd like to read the book for some more tips, but his success comes from asking people to do a specific task. He makes sure there are people to help if there are problems. If the scope is too broad it's hard to get people to do a job. Celmer said giving incentives or recognition to volunteers can help retain them. Garlock said he doesn't accept every volunteer if they are not qualified.

Waldron said we have not done a good job in the past recognizing volunteers. Lisa Scott agreed that recognition is important to get people to keep volunteering. Benson said jobs will always be more plentiful than volunteers and if you list so many open positions on the website, it looks like there are too many openings and the organization isn't working well. Colburn said the web page listing job opportunities for volunteers is long and hasn't been updated in a long time. Abramson said he would work to update the listing so that the most important jobs are listed and those that are not urgent will be removed.

Waldron said people need to think that their work is important. He spent more than a hundred hours doing a survey of club leaders and when he reported the results of his efforts, he got the sense that the Board did nothing with it. He will not donate so much time again without knowing that the work will be appreciated.

Colburn said incentives may help. Some people are self-motivated, but others need incentives.

Abramson said he will try harder in the future. Robbins said we should prioritize job openings and advertise them. Garlock said rather than advertising job openings, we need to seek individuals and ask them to do a specific job that we think they are suited for.

b) Discussion of Fund-raising

Abramson said the issue of fundraising is more important than ever this year because of the Ing funding stopping. He wants to organize for a serious effort this year. The AGA has never been successful at fundraising before now. He is open to the idea of more people helping, but he doesn't know how to be more successful this time.

Lisa Scott said we need to give volunteers specific ideas. Abramson said he found a website that gives ideas to non-profit organizations on fund raising strategies. He will send us all a link later.

Colburn said he has gotten proposals from small companies who want to advertise on the web page. One promising offer was \$3000 for a small text ad at the bottom of the page. Another idea is to have a company sponsor a tournament in exchange for banners and posters.

Abramson said fundraising will be his top priority this year. Celmer volunteered to join a committee to fundraise. Okun said he has experience, but not a lot of success so far at fundraising.

Abramson said he will ask an AGA member to write a grant application and send it to some foundations. Schmidt said we have to have a consistent point of contact so if someone wants to donate they know who to call and to ensure that not more than one person will contact a potential donor.

Garlock said any fundraising effort should be communicated to members so they know what is going on. Wealthy members may be able to serve as “rainmakers”.

c) Recognition of long-term members

Abramson said he has been approached by long term members suggesting they should be recognized some way. More than 100 current members have been members for more than 30 years. If we were to offer a lifetime membership to long term members, it could result in \$4000-\$5000 per year lost income. Another less expensive option is to give pins for long-term membership.

Karen Jordan said offering free lifetime membership to 30 year members would make her less likely to buy a lifetime membership herself.

Robbins said offering members' pins starting at 5, 10, or 15 years might encourage them to stay a member longer. Benson suggested

pins like those for Sunday school where there is a base pin and additions.

Colburn said pins are nice. For \$30 members don't get that much: a membership card, members' version of the e-journal, and a yearbook. We need to give members more.

Benson said ratings are a big reason people join. We should not offer ratings to non-members. He would do away with the one-day membership that allows non-members to play in a tournament and get rated. Allan noted that about half of our members have not played any rated games.

Paul Matthews strongly objected to restricting access by members to the ratings of those they have played – including those opponents who are non-members. Several people suggested that we look into creating a members-only section of the website where the ratings and other content for the membership would be available. Recent work by Jonathan Bresler has made it possible for a player to see their rated game history back to the early 1990's. This could be in the members' only section.

Keith Arnold said he might be in favor of giving long-term members a break on future dues increases and hold their rate at \$30 per year. Some people in the room thought that was a good idea.

No decision was made on what to do for long term members.

d) Memorandum of Understanding of Cooperation between AGA and China and Korea Amateur Baduk Association

In Korea and China, the demand for professionals has decreased as fewer students pursue a career as a go professional. At the World Mind Sports games, Abramson was contacted with a proposal from the Chinese Professional Go Association to send their go professionals to the U.S. to live with US families and teach children while they are here. This program is being implemented.

This week, the Korean Amateur Baduk Association gave Abramson a memorandum of understanding, (MOU) indicating that they will cooperate with the AGA to promote go. This cooperation will include exchanging personnel as we plan to do with the Chinese Go Association. Abramson signed the MOU and showed it to the group.

(End of President's report)

5. Old Business

None

6. New Business

a. Continuous Membership

Abramson said the Board adopted a revision to the policy for representation qualifications for international tournaments. The two tournament rule is now gone, and two key qualifications are: continuous AGA membership for the previous 12 months, and ten or more rated games in the year. The ten game minimum requirement now applies to professionals as well as to amateurs. Some people who were disqualified for events at the Congress because of this rule were children and some were adults. There have been a lot of complaints from those who were disqualified because of this rule. The issue came up in the Ing tournament and the Pair Go tournament. Abramson said so many people have complained about this strict policy he wants to discuss this issue among the Board.

Jie Li said he would support a 30-day grace period during which the AGA will send notices warning of disqualification in the event of a lapse in membership. Chuck Robbins said the AGA is sending reminders before the membership expires. Paul Barchilon said he didn't receive a renewal notice and he has spoken to others who also didn't get a reminder. Barchilon said if a member is strong and has a chance of qualifying for an international tournament, maybe a phone call is in order before canceling their membership. He also said if a child is a first time AGA member, the rule should not be enforced for the first year.

Waldron said he doesn't want to call 7 Dans to remind them to renew their membership. As tournament coordinator, he has dealt with four different international representation policies in the past year. Every time the policy changes, the AGA loses credibility. Waldron said 30 days is a reasonable grace period and members should be responsible for renewing.

(At this point, Keith Arnold, Gordon Castanza, Chris Garlock, Andrew Jackson, and Jie Li left the meeting to attend the Ing Masters' Tournament.)

John Hogan said for youth members, since the child doesn't control their credit card, it is unfair to be strict with them.

Terry Benson disagreed that there was adequate notice about the change in implementation of the policy. There was no notice in the e-Journal. The minutes of the board did not mention the change in the implementation of the continuous membership policy. The strong players were notified directly but youth players and young female players who may be eligible to compete internationally through the pair go tournament or a women-only tournament were not.

Chris Kirschner said the continuous membership rule has been around for a long time. The issue here is how we implement the rule. The only change is that Waldron is monitoring the record regularly for the first time.

Okun said we voted on the policy, but he doesn't remember discussing the continuous membership policy. Okun said he thinks it is an unimportant rule. Robbins and Kirschner said it is a very important rule. Barchilon said he thinks it is an important rule but shouldn't be implemented in a punitive fashion.

Haynes asked if we accept the postmark date or the delivered date. The response was the postmark date or the date of the tournament at which the membership was renewed. Kirschner said the responsibility for proving there is a gap is the AGA's. If we can't prove there was a lapse, the member will receive the benefit of the doubt.

Waldron had left the meeting when this comment was made. He since clarified that he does not have access to the postmark date of the check. He gets the membership report that Sam Zimmerman sends out once a month (and sometimes more). Waldron said there is a natural grace period, but not one of a uniform length, because his data doesn't show the actual renewal date but just that a member appears in each monthly report. If someone renews at a tournament or through the mail, the membership will not be recorded until the tournament director sends the money in or when the PO Box is emptied.

Benson said many of our members do not get their e-mails and there may be reason to override this rule or make exceptions.

Matt Mallory made a suggestion that youth should be offered a membership that lasts until they are 22 years old. There was an enthusiastic response to this suggestion, and the issue will be discussed at the General Membership Assembly.

Roy Schmidt, Willard Haynes, Chuck Robbins, and Laura Kolb said they are in favor of having no grace period. Okun and Celmer are in favor of a 30 day grace period. Abramson said he is in favor of no grace period for adults, but a more lenient policy for children. He said he would bring a proposal to the Board at the next meeting.

Matt Mallory said there needs to be good communication of the policy in the e-journal.

b. Executive Session

Abramson requested an executive session to discuss a personnel issue involving a volunteer for the next Congress. Okun made a motion that the Board have an Executive Session that would be off the record. Haynes seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous to enter Executive Session.

7. Establish time and date of next Board meeting

The next monthly conference call will be Sunday, September 27, 2009 at 8:00 EDT.

8. Adjourn

Robbins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Celmer seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously. The annual Congress Board meeting adjourned at 3:15 PM EDT.

Minutes submitted by Pauline Pohl, AGA Secretary