

**Minutes of the 2001 AGA National Assembly
July 27 2001
York, Pennsylvania**

Present

Affiliation

John Goon	Hillandale Go and Shogi Club (Silver Spring, MD)
Willard Draisin	New Mexico Go Association
Terry Benson	American Go Foundation
Chris Kirschner	Seattle Go Center
Rob Muldowney	Highland Park Go Club
Mike Peng	Houston Go Club
Jung Hoon Lee	Mile High Go Club
Hosuk Yi	Los Angeles Go Club
Haskell Small	Greater Washington Go Club
Bob Barber	Evanston Go Club
Harold Lloyd	Cleveland Go Club
Susan Weir	Ann Arbor Go Club
Mark Rubenstein	Evanston Go Club
William Hewitt	Empty Sky Go Club
David Allen	Games Galore Go Club
Chuck Robbins	Lancaster Go Club
Charles C. French	Lancaster Go Club
Pauline Pohl	Evanston Go Club
Dee Dee Lee Eckles	Denver Go Association
Ken Koester	Baltimore Go Club
Glenn Peters	Portland Go Club
Larry Russ	Hoboken Go Club
Bill Cobb	Richmond Go Club
Arnold Eudell	Baltimore Go Club
Don Wiener	Massachusetts Go Association
Craig Hutchinson	AGA Archivist
David Dinhofer	Bayou Go Club
Keith L. Arnold	Baltimore Go Club
Louisa Chan	San Francisco Go Club
Noni Redmond	Education Coordinator
Steve Burrall	Davis-Sacramento Go Club
????? Waller	Observer
Terri Schurter	Wings Across Calm Water Go Club
Jean DeMaiffe	Sunnyvale Go Club
Sam Zimmerman	Lancaster Go Club
Jeff Shaevel	Austin Go Club
Larry Gross	Go for Yu Go Club
John C. Stephenson	Wings Across Calm Water Go Club
Terry Assael	Governance Commission

Mike Lash
Duane Burns
Lianzhou Yu
Ron Snyder

Governance Commission
Observer/Cleveland Go Club
Observer/St Louis
Observer/New Jersey

The members of the Assembly and guests were welcomed by AGA president Roy Laird, and minutes of the 2000 meeting were distributed.

OFFICER REPORTS

Chapter Coordinator, Bill Cobb, reported that we have achieved a record number of AGA chapters (over 70) and we continue to enhance the services available to them. Every new member receives a referral to the closest Chapter and the Chapter is notified of the new member. President Laird also negotiated with the American Go Foundation to provide matching grants of up to \$250 to Chapters to help offset the cost of books and equipment.

Chapters have also been receiving five copies each of the Journal for use as promotional items and Chapter meetings. Due to the rising cost of the publication as the Journal grows in size, and the limited enthusiasm most Chapters expressed for this service, it is being discontinued. However, Chapters can still request complimentary copies of Go Journal as needed.

Membership Secretary, John Goon reported membership rose slightly in all categories last year, as detailed in the Annual Report. Last year membership totaled 1625, this year 1750, an overall increase of 7.7%.

Treasurer, Ulo Tamm was not present, but Roy Laird summarized his report, stating that although our total income increased slightly this year, membership dues income actually decreased. With the increased cost of publishing an expanded 48-page Journal and declining membership revenue, we must consider our fiscal situation. A decrease in membership income is not consistent with the reported increase in membership. A Finance Committee was established to review the situation and make recommendations (see below).

Education Coordinator, None Redmond, reported that the American Go Foundation has funded a 16-week study group for four children to be taught by James Kerwin. This year's go camp was attended by 35 children, including some children who hold the promise of becoming top ranking players one day. The number of children at this year's Congress is equivalent to last year's, a real accomplishment since York is not a tourist destination that draws families. Thanks to support from the Ing Foundation, there are 100 teachers spread around the country potentially reaching 5000 children.

Web Master, Chuck Robbins, reported that a new and improved AGA home page is in development and appealed for volunteers to assist with web maintenance.

Archivist, Craig Hutchinson, with the assistance of Yoko Hashi, has edited the entries for over 900 books and 400 periodicals in the AGA archive. Also, all games in the AGJ and selected other periodicals have been indexed by *fuseki* and will be added to the AGA web site. Craig would like to archive materials from all the AGA Congresses.

NEW BUSINESS

Vice-Presidential Elections will be held next year. In the Eastern and Western Regions, incumbents Chen Dao Lin and Larry Gross, respectively, will run unopposed. In the Central Region, the vacancy left by out-going VP, Jeff Shavel, has led to a competitive election with two candidates: Harold Lloyd from Cleveland and Mike Peng from Houston. Each candidate made statements in support of their background and qualifications to the Assembly, and Keith Arnold and Roy Laird thanked Jeff Shavel for his dedicated service to the AGA, a sentiment widely shared and expressed by many people attending the meeting.

Two New Committees will be formed this year:

A **Finance Committee**, chaired by Chuck Robbins, will review the AGA dues structure and other financial management issues. Although the number of members has increased, sponsor and sustainer levels have remained the same. One of the committee's priorities will be to examine measures that might boost donor support.

A **Certification Committee**, led by Chris Kirschner, will develop a mechanism through which the AGA will issue certifications of rank, as is done in Asia. In Asia, the Nihon Kiin derives significant revenue from issuing diplomas. By imposing stringent criteria, perhaps a mixture of ratings data and professional examination, the Committee hopes to create a way for players to recognize their achievement in an enduring way. The Committee will also consider such issues as how to integrate rankings with tournament ratings. The committee will review different models, including that used in Britain.

The 2002 Congress will be held in Chicago and organized by Bob Barber and the No Exit Go Club. Polly Pohl has been researching venues and reported that the task has changed drastically in recent years. Space is becoming more difficult to find, a result of an upsurge in the use of college campuses for an increasing number and variety of conferences. Organizers of this year's Congress echoed these problems. Their original venue canceled without notice, leaving them to scramble for another site,. Colleges often refuse to contract for specific dates until the last minute.

At the moment, the top choice is Concordia College, a suburban campus that prohibits liquor but has air conditioned rooms. More and more colleges are adopting stringent liquor policies that apply to conferences as well. Those beer-soaked parties in the rumpus room may be a thing of the past.

Because it has become harder to find sites with adequate housing amenities, regardless of increasing expense, about 25% of attendees now stay off site, sometimes at minimal difference in cost. It was suggested that we explore hotels and conference centers as an alternative to college venues; however, it was noted that although hotel room rates are comparable, the cost of food is much higher. Increasing cost would discourage youth and families. While college dormitories may leave much to be desired, attendees have the option of using them at moderate cost or staying elsewhere. It was recommended that the AGA establish a standing Congress Committee to search out venues at least two years in advance. If a

Committee organized the Congress, we would not be restricted to locations where a chapter exists and this might open new options.

A motion was introduced, seconded and unanimously approved to hold the 2002 Congress in Chicago. The importance of avoiding a conflict with the European Congress was emphasized.

Proposed sites for the coming years include New York City for 2004 and Tacoma, Washington for 2005. Orange County is considering a bid for 2003.

The **Governance Committee** circulated a proposal for revision of the current AGA bylaws. Roy Laird introduced the subject by explaining that most organizations review their bylaws every three to five years, so this first revision of the AGA bylaws which were instituted in 1993, is long overdue. Although any change to the bylaws will require a vote of the membership, the Committee sought the support of the Assembly for the revisions drafted to date. Governance Committee chair, John Goon, presented each of the seven proposed revisions for discussion.

1. The AGA Board of Directors will become an elected body.

Under the current bylaws, board members are appointed. There were no objections to this revision.

2. Elections will continue to be conducted by weighted vote of chapters.

Intense debate arose on this point. Some members of the Assembly felt that the board should be chosen by “member voting” — direct election by all members, while others favored the current system of “chapter voting”, or electing the leadership by weighted vote of chapters.

Proponents of “member voting” made the following points:

- Only 75% of AGA members belong to chapters; the others have no voice in the organization.
- Direct election could encourage more members to become interested in the management of the AGA and involved as volunteers;
- The current election format does not encourage chapters to express internal differences of opinion, because one representative casts all their votes [Note: Nothing in the AGA bylaws prevents a chapter from splitting its ballot. This just has not been a common practice.]
- Chapter representatives themselves are not necessarily elected, and therefore may not reflect the view of a constituency and are not bound to vote as their members direct.
- Popular vote would make the board accountable to all members.
- In one of the proposals that follows, the President would be appointed by the board rather than elected by the clubs, concentrating even more power at the top.

Those favoring continued “chapter voting” did so for the following reasons:

- If we wish to encourage the formation of new chapters, we should support them by strengthening their voice in the organization..

- Volunteers who do the work of running the organization (i.e., the chapter representatives) tend to be more aware of the issues confronting the organization and the qualifications of the candidates.
- In addition, it is just and fair that those who do the work to maintain the organization earn the decision-making authority of the vote.
- Most club members are not interested in the internal workings of the AGA. They join because they want to play in tournaments, get rated, and receive the other benefits of membership.
- At present, we do not have the mechanisms in place for effective campaigning. How would candidates make their case to the general membership? This infrastructure needs to be developed before we move to popular vote.

“Chapter voting advocates” responded to “member voting” claims that members are “disenfranchised” noting that any member can join any Chapter. There are no geographic restrictions. Members can participate in decisions, by affiliating with a like-minded Chapter, or even forming one. Small chapters have a proportionally larger voice than large chapters, because any chapter with 5 members gets one vote, but ten additional members are required to gain an additional vote.

“Member voting” advocates rejected the notion that members should be deprived of voting rights because of a presumption that they are not interested, since disinterested members are free to refrain from voting.

On the issue that some Chapters may not decide democratically how to use their votes, most discussants agreed that mandating or trying to supervise such a process in Chapters would be a cumbersome, unwelcome and probably impossible task. In addition it was noted that dissatisfied chapter members can work for change within their chapter, or even form a separate Chapter if they wish.

A non-binding straw poll of participants in the discussion was taken, including both voting members and observers. 16 participants in the meeting favored direct member voting, while 13 favor weighted vote of chapters. The Commission will continue to study this controversial issue.

3. The Board will consist of five to nine members

There were no objections to this proposal

4. The Board will be composed of an equal number of Directors from each region and the balance elected as at-large Directors

A question was raised as to whether this proposal would do away with the post of Regional Vice-President. Under this proposal, Regional Vice-Presidents could be appointed by the Board in whatever number they deemed necessary.

5. The Board will appoint AGA officers, including the President

When this proposal was introduced, some questions arose concerning the power structure and the accountability of volunteers. Although “the buck” has to stop somewhere, it was suggested that the AGA develop a grievance mechanism or

ombudsman to arbitrate controversies that might arise between volunteers and officers.

6. Directors will be elected to staggered two-year terms

It was suggested that the process of seating the first new board could begin by seating the current Regional Vice-Presidents to be Regional Directors and holding the first election for the remaining four board members (i.e., three additional Regional Directors and one Director-at-Large). The following year, elections would be held for three Regional Directors. It was also noted that two of three VPs were running unopposed this year, whereas, a seat on the Board might attract additional candidates. The Commission will continue to study this issue.

7. Removal of a Board member will require a two-thirds vote of the Board

It was pointed out that the Commission must determine how vacancies resulting from removal will be filled: by appointment of the board or by special election.

The meeting concluded with the unanimous approval of the minutes from last year's Assembly meeting.

- submitted by Terry Assael