

Unit 142 Board Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2025

Attendance: Ron Franck (President), Bill Holt (Vice President), Maureen Loeb (Secretary), Michael Pascal (Treasurer), Robyn Fennel, Jim Gump, David Loeb, Kathryn Rector, June Threlkeld, Terri Tunick.

President's Remarks:

Ron Frank emphasized the importance of focusing on

- Education: Introduce new players to this exciting game. Provide lessons so they can learn and participate in local club games.
- Events: Do everything we can to run unit events that are enjoyable for all members. Focus on games that beginners and intermediate players can participate in.
- Clubs: Support club managers and help them augment more participation at their local games.

Ron discussed his confidence in the Board and desire to empower board members, and not micromanage the board. Ron mentioned the Board is allowed to have up to 15 Directors. He suggested that we recruit possible board members for our various committees. Ron asked the Board to make him aware of good candidates for the Board. An effort should be made to recruit someone from Greensburg onto the board.

Secretary's Report:

The minutes from the November 16th meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report:

Michael Pascal presented a financial summary, and reported the Unit is in good financial position.

Committee Reports:

Education:

Bill Holt reported lessons continue apace in Treesdale (Lorraine Hanna), Glenshaw/Fox Chapel (Hertzberg/Franck/Holt), and the Mt. Lebanon Library (Geinzer). Upcoming beginner lessons scheduled for Sewickley (Holt) and Bridgeville (Loeb). Bill mentioned the need for Adult Lesson coverage & launch in the East Hills / Monroeville area. A site and staff are needed.

Supervised play began at Glenshaw Jan 16th. Weather outside was frightful, but the 7 players who showed up had a good time. Hopefully the next session will be better attended. Ron, Ernie, Linda Fried and Todd staffed the event.

Jump Start Bridge is a school focused program and they attended a conference for teachers here in Pittsburgh in November. The target is 'Gifted/Special' students. I

have asked for a dBase of those teachers for the purposes of offering in-school Bridge lessons, receiving nothing. That dBase has not authorized to share their contact info, but Patty Tucker can contact them for us. Teachers attended this conference from Belle Vernon, Saxton, East Stroudsburg, Murrysville, Pittsburgh, and Greensburg

We need to hit these people. But first we need to have a plan. Who is going to teach?

Start collecting background checked volunteers.
CCAC evening classes were investigated. The site offered by CCAC was not ideal. Holt will assess other possible locations.

Ron Franck proposed the PBA pay an instructor to teach those classes if the modest stipend offered by CCAC (I believe it was \$25/hr.) is insufficiently attractive. The motion was seconded and approved.

Membership:

Maureen Loeb shared membership reports from the ACBL. Maureen called attention to the Unit's loss of 4 players in the last 12 months. Over that same period, the District lost 5 members. The best performing Unit was Erie which gained 27 members. The Board discussed the importance of recruiting new players.

Terri Tunick volunteered to contact Steve Grzegorzewski to learn about Erie's approach to recruiting and share her findings with the Board.

IN / Publicity / Marketing / Facebook:

Terri Tunick reported that she didn't have administrative access to Facebook yet. Terri committed to following up with Denise Dufour to get the credentials. She discussed several new marketing initiatives including using Facebook, Instagram, QR codes on flyers, coffee house games/get togethers, Pop Up games, and contacting local newspapers for PR.

Tournaments:

Ron Frank discussed District 5's desire to move the Pittsburgh Regional to the DoubleTree in Meadowlands. Ron reported the DoubleTree used to be a Holiday Inn, and has not been upgraded to the quality of a DoubleTree hotel. Ron expressed doubt that a tournament at the Meadowlands DoubleTree could be successful. District 5 has signed an exclusive agreement with ConferenceDirect to book hotels for tournaments. District 5 has stated that their agreement prohibits us from book or negotiating with a hotel for a tournament.

Ron asked David Loeb to discuss the competition with other regionals around Labor Day and how some units run their regionals. David discussed how the competition from the Atlanta, Irvine, and Santa Clara attract clients hiring professional teams. These professional teams consume a lot of hotel nights which

reduce, sometimes eliminate, fees for the ballroom. The competing regionals around Labor Day make that week one of the worst weeks to hold a regional. Pittsburgh has a lot to offer to local bridge players and players from other areas. Moving the Pittsburgh regional to another date offers the opportunity for the Pittsburgh regional to live up to its potential.

Ron reported that he, June, David, and Maureen met with District 5 representatives at the Cleveland Regional. The Unit 5 representatives discussed our concern about the competition around Labor Day, and our optimism about the potential for the Pittsburgh Regional if it is moved to a different date, and is hosted at a hotel convenient to the airport. The D5 representatives agreed ask ConferenceDirect to look at the availability and cost of hotels near the airport in the 3rd and 4th weeks of September.

Maureen Loeb added that she served on the Unit 240 Board in District 9. Unit 240 managed all aspects of the Orlando Regional, including the regional's P & L. The district's approval is needed for a unit to manage its regional. Maureen suggested that our Unit may need to ask District 5 for their authorization to run and manage the Pittsburgh Regional if discussions with District 5 are not productive.

A motion to empower Ron Franck and Bill Holt to request the District's authorization to run and manage all aspects of the Pittsburgh Regional was approved.

Special Games:

Kathryn Rector discussed how her travel plans were going to prevent her from attending the Pro-Am. Ron asked June to take the lead on the Pro-Am. June agreed. Kathryn will continue to assist with the Pro-Am, but will not be available for the day of the Pro-Am. The Pro-Am is scheduled for Saturday, May 17th in Glenshaw.

Club Liaison:

Ron Franck advised that he and Bill Holt are working on a draft of the Club Liaison job description, and will be sharing the draft with Jim Gump for review.

Website:

David Loeb reported Bill Holt has done a terrific job managing the Unit's website for 22 years. It is remarkable what Bill accomplished using tools which are no longer supported.

The migration of the Unit's website to a supported platform (Joomla) has begun. The website is live during the process. The Joomla platform has many advantages. The main things you will notice is the ability to easily place banners advertising events, classes, and accomplishments on any or all pages, and improved navigation between pages. Joomla recognizes whether you are using your phone, tablet, or PC to look at a page and adjusts the page accordingly.

The website is a vital tool for promoting bridge, games, and lessons. Marketing efforts on social media are most effective when connected to a web page with a call to action. Currently club managers can add a PDF to promote events at their club. I would like to build on that as follows:

- Allow teachers to post their information on a dedicated web page
- Allow teachers and club managers to promote their clubs and classes on a web page rather than a PDF.

Propose adding an extension to allow teachers and club managers to easily edit their pages. The cost of the extension is \$99.

The motion was seconded and approved.

David said the website will be a more valuable tool if we mobilize our Facebook page (and add other social media). The social media posts will increase the visibility of the web page and vice versa. The Facebook page should have been set up as group to promote activity. Some of the benefits of a group can be realized by allowing board members, club managers, and teachers to post on our Facebook page. There is an argument for allowing all followers to post. An administrator can remove any inappropriate posts.

Newsletter:

David Loeb reported the newsletters are now being sent using Pianola's custom templates which allows the Unit to track clicks to better gauge what articles interest members. Pianola is the ACBL's email communication partner. David intends to publish a Unit newsletter on a monthly basis, and asked for articles for the January newsletter.

New Business:

1. Transparency
A motion to share approved minutes on the Unit's website was seconded, and approved.
2. STaC games:
Do players want more STaC games? Currently, District 5 has only 2 STaC weeks, and doesn't hold any Royal STaCs which award gold, silver, red, and black points. Should we urge District 5 to hold more STaC weeks?

David Loeb, the Unit 142 STaC Coordinator, was tasked with approaching District 5's STaC Coordinator to assess the potential for sanctioning more STaC games.

3. Using special games to invigorate bridge in underserved areas
Suggestion to identify areas of Unit 142 which used to have bridge games, but no longer have a club. Consider using a special game like a Unit Championship to bring a bridge event to the underserved area. The Board's participation in the event can help ensure a viable game is available for local players. The games can help us assess the interest in lessons and/or club games in the area.

David Loeb posed the question of how the Unit should use the available 24 Unit Championships. In 2024, the Unit used only 1 of the available 24 Unit Championships. David suggested we allocate some of the Unit Championships to clubs to provide their players an additional special event.

The Board discussed looking for opportunities to grow bridge in underserved areas and to determine how best to allocate Unit Championships.

4. Board meeting schedule

Is there a need to hold all board meetings in Glenshaw on Saturday mornings? Are board members able to meet during the week? Supporting weekend games and evening games is important because they provide an opportunity for working bridge players and students to play face-to-face bridge. Should we hold some board meetings at other clubs to boost their table counts and be visible to their players? Should we hold a Board meeting in conjunction with a game at an underserved area?

Ron Franck shared his experience at the Edgeworth invitational game, and how valuable it was to meet the Edgeworth players. Ron urged Board Members to attend club games throughout the Unit to meet players, and better understand their bridge goals and needs. The Board discussed how holding Board meetings at multiple clubs over the year would help the Board meet more players and would boost attendance at games.

The Board voted to move Board meetings between clubs to facilitate broader interaction with players in the Unit.

Ron Franck agreed to explore holding March's Board meeting at a game in Greensburg or Export Moose.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was seconded and approved.