

# Unit 142 Board Meeting

Monday, March 16, 2026

In Attendance: Ron Franck, president; Bill Holt, vice-president; June Threlkeld; Jim Gump; Robyn Fennell; Terri Tunick; David Loeb, Maureen Loeb secretary; Richard Wilt; Mike Pascall, treasurer.

## **President Ron Franck's Remarks:**

Meeting was called to order; the president shared appreciation for the board's hard work and noted he's dealing with some health issues but doing better.

## **Secretary Report by Maureen Loeb**

Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed; one comment was to use a different font (Tahoma was mentioned). Motion made and seconded to accept the minutes; the minutes were approved.

## **Treasurer Report by Michael Pascall**

The Treasurer's report (as of Feb 28) was reviewed; reports are no longer sent in "technical color" due to readability issues. Assets compared year-over-year increased.

Need to add another signer to bank account over the summer; discussion on whether to have two vs. three signers (general preference for fewer).

Clarified organization tax status: Unit is a 501(c)(7), not a 501(c)(3); Form 990-EZ is filed annually (due May 15; extension possible).

Question raised about sales-tax exemption/tax ID usage for purchases; treasurer said they'd make a note and look into how it works at the state level.

## **Education update by Bill Holt**

Education report: classes and supervised play are ongoing, but Wednesday night supervised play is being suspended due to very low attendance and \$100/session cost; afternoon supervised play will continue. Recent student party had strong turnout (about 8 tables); Terri and Marilyn were recognized for planning; flyers promoted Gus's "99er" game. Some feedback that lesson material may be too advanced; goal stated to keep content accessible.

Need identified for a next-step program for students finishing lessons, especially given geographic reluctance to travel between areas. Proposal discussed to create an online "academy" using RealBridge and/or Shark/SharpBridge.

- RealBridge overview: supports teaching with audio/video, but requires full tables (no bots), implying a need for mentors.
- Shark/SharpBridge overview: more teaching-oriented and includes robots; teachers can modify hands/difficulty.

Board indicated permission to pursue online initiatives; ability to collect modest user fees online was noted.

- District support: District program may reimburse expenses for teaching games/locations (up to about \$1,000). District 5 wants to meet with unit education leaders (Steve Grzegorzewski and Jim Overcashier) to discuss funding/plans.
- School outreach: Bill plans to contact Plum School District about bridge activity there; Woodland Hills contact has not returned calls.
- Volunteer interest: one participant stated they now have school clearances and can help in schools; clearances discussed as expiring after five years.
- Mentoring: Lorraine Hannah has a mentoring report and is recruiting mentees; plan to distribute mentoring flyers to clubs.
- Offer made by a member to help with Plum outreach because they are a Plum graduate.

#### **Membership update by Maureen Loeb**

Membership report highlighted that over half of members have 200 masterpoints or less, raising concerns about engagement and offerings for newer players.

Regionals and Sectionals offer opportunities to increase engagement among newer/lower-point players.

- Recruiting approach discussed: outreach to other card-playing communities (example: attending a euchre meetup and inviting players to a Come Play Cards with Us evening event at the Sectional). Card

players can be invited to try “Bridge Battle”, a trick taking version of bridge with no auctions, which the ACBL is pushing to get new players hooked on bridge.

- Director pipeline: one member completed a two-day director training and plans to take the exam; interest in running very low-point games (e.g., 0–49) and apprenticing; ongoing need for fill-in directors was noted.
- Need identified for follow-up/outreach to members who are inactive or at risk of becoming inactive; concept of a “bridge ambassador” committee discussed, with possibility of hiring help if volunteers aren’t available.

### **Sapphire program update by David Loeb**

Unit 142 has 76 new members since May (the Start of the Sapphire program).

- ~18 became regular members (~23%);
- ~25 played face-to-face (~32%);
- ~45 earned masterpoints (implying many play only online);
- ~31 showed no trackable progress (~41%).

Question about emailing newer players: Confirmed that free-play programs require opt-in permission to email; Unit can email students who opt in.

### **Marketing update by Terri Tunick**

Publicity/marketing: ongoing posting to Facebook and local “things to do” groups; discussion about expanding access and capability.

- Website permissions: Chris currently has low-level editing access (edit existing pages but not create new pages); plan discussed to provide broader website edit access and similar access for Facebook. Chris agreed to send a list of up-and-coming social media accounts to the group.
- Marketing agency discussion: prior conversations with Rachel at JAGS; mixed feelings; interest in using them primarily for TV/radio access ahead of the regional.

### **Website/newsletter update by David Loeb**

Putting an emphasis on creating landing pages tied to social media call-to-action posts (so clicks drive to the website rather than just enlarging images).

The newsletter uses Pianola, an ACBL partner, to send email blast. Pianola provides analytics to track opens/clicks; request made for more contributed articles; target for next newsletter was late March/early April.

#### Website requests:

- some items still show last year's information or are unpublished pending finalization.
- ACBL tournament pages/location details were flagged as incorrect/outdated; need to coordinate with the district to correct.
- Flyer improvements suggested: include the year and day names/full dates to avoid confusion with old flyers.
- Masterpoint races page: question raised about missing/less-prominent information; commitment made to double-check links and publish a separate page covering Unit 142/185/229 masterpoint information.

#### **Spring sectional update by David & Maureen Loeb**

- Spring sectional schedule/stratifications reviewed; times considered workable if using 24 boards.
- Bar arrangement: venue will waive the usual minimum; unit pays \$50/night with a cash bar; concept framed as "cocktails with the expert" after the second session.
- Lunch approach discussed:
  - Venue area has many restaurants and possible food trucks, unlike prior venue.
  - Option proposed for two-tier entry pricing: standard entry vs. bundled entry including lunch for a few dollars more.
  - Food truck concept: pre-paid tickets and pre-ordered sandwich counts to reduce waste.
- Strategy discussed to encourage two-session participation (especially for limited games) by bundling lunch with two-session entry.
- Entry fee discussion: historically \$15/session; district had approved \$16 elsewhere, but unit noted costs are lower and leaned toward staying at \$15; lunch ticket price discussed as modest (example: ~\$5) if not bundled.
- Thursday evening events:
  - "Come play cards" night (not limited to bridge) to attract non-bridge/card players; plan includes a mini-bridge option (trick-taking focus, no bidding)

- 0–49 (“forty-niner”) game.
- Friday evening event: Zip Swiss

Start time settled around 6:45 for evening activities, with food (pizza one night; tenders/quesadillas discussed for another).

### **Summer sectional update by Jim Gump:**

Decisions deferred until after spring sectional; plan to do a postmortem before advertising.

### **Fall Sectional:**

Motion passed to cancel the fall sectional and move the Pro-Am to the fall due to schedule congestion (regional moved late; GNT in early October; seasonal travel).

### **Pro-Am update by June Threlkeld**

Need to visit a potential venue and select a date; expectation stated that a venue may be available for free.

### **NAP Subsidies**

The Unit agreed to subsidize \$200 for each of the eight Unit members who represented the District at the NAP championship in St. Louis; send names/addresses to treasurer and email authorization. Note made about tax implications if reimbursements exceed \$600 (1099-MISC threshold discussed).

### **Pittsburgh Regional update by David & Maureen Loeb**

- Schedule: Regional dates moved to Sept 14–20 to avoid competing with major Regionals; extending to a full week seen as important for traveler value.
- Branding: position the regional as a “bridge festival for all levels,”
- Feel: want a bridge party atmosphere with evening activities (welcoming party, trivia, karaoke, music).
- Logo/sticker refresh: new convention card sticker/logo created; positive feedback on design.
- Merchandise: put the logo on glasses (cost under \$3 each) to use as prizes and sell at the prize/welcome desk (e.g., \$5–\$6 each; bundle pricing) to raise funds.

- Attracting new players: proposed play and learn program tracks for newcomers, beginners, and intermediate players. Intend to hire a celebrity host. Currently negotiating with Robert Todd (ACBL Education Foundation president; Adventures in Bridge founder). Want to attract non-ACBL players and funnel them into newcomer/beginner tracks.
- Plan to invite bridge content creators/podcasters (“creator row”) to boost publicity and create additional tables.
- PR goals: local TV/radio coverage; interest in PR help and possibly a marketing firm for access.
- Grant: ACBL Education Foundation encouraged applying for a grant; expected ask range mentioned (\$3K–\$5K) pending a financial case.

Concern raised about space and possible need for overflow (adjacent hotel suggested); desire to secure downstairs space for limited games to improve experience vs. last year.

Food feedback from last year’s regional was mixed, with some complaints about hotel food; discussion leaned toward grab-and-go options and nearby restaurants.

Casino sponsorship attempts previously unsuccessful (e.g., free play requests declined), but the group agreed it may be worth trying again with a stronger pitch.

#### **Next meeting and adjournment**

Next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13 at Temple Emanuel. Start time set for 10:30 AM (before the 12:15 game).

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded, and approved.