**Rugby Arizona SYRO**

**Special General Meeting of the Executive Committee**

**Draft Meeting Minutes**

**Date**: Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2020

**Time**: 8:00 pm

**Location**: Zoom Meeting

1. **Call to Order**: President Taylor Miller called the meeting to order at 8:04 p.m.
2. **Roll Call**: Members of the board in attendance.

-Taylor Miller (President)

-David “Elf” Thomas (Vice President)

-Yvette Speers (Treasurer)

-Angela Wagner-Gabbard (Secretary)

**General Membership and Guests Present:**

Roll Call of Membership and Team Represented

-Harmen Tjaarda Scottsdale Wolves Rugby Club

-Hans Gregg Salpointe Catholic Rugby Club

-Ali Crosby North Valley Scorpions

-Jeff McIntyre- Management Team Member- High School Boys Commissioner

-Steve Ciarfalia- Brophy Rugby Club

-Jeremy Parentau- Non-voting member Scottsdale Wolves

-Rob Speers Phoenix Firebirds Rugby Club

-Glen Baugmath East Valley Eagles RFC

-Jeff King Sahuarita Spartans RFC

-Barry Gabbard Tucson Roosters

-Sam Kelly Eclipse Rugby

-Mike Frugone- Non-voting member Eclipse Rugby

-Stephanie Shoemaker Glendale

-Tricia Quiroz- Management Team Member- Girls Commissioner

-Hal Morgan Tempe Rugby Club

-Andy Avery Southwest Rugby Referee Society

-Rose Marasco RAZ Volunteer

**Absences:**

-Kevin Harris- Northern Arizona RFC

-OJ Hawea- Red Mountain Rugby

-Mark Marrero- Tucson Blackbirds Rugby Club

-Mike Webber East Valley Eagles RFC

-Bo Manusina Glendale Coyotes

-North Valley Scorpions Allision (Alli) Crosby

-Zach Neveleff Salpointe Catholic Rugby Club

-Fitu Pauga- Management Team Member- Youth Commissioner

-Deirdre Colao Member at Large for Bobcats

-Roy Hulsey- Cienega Bobcats

-Kona Fotu Red Mountain

-Jack Van Rensburg- Black Mountain Rugby

Taylor Miller verbally confirmed that we had a quorum of the executive committee present.

1. **Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes from Special Meeting of General Membership for Aug. 24, 2020**:

**Angela made a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes for the Aug. 24, 2020, Special General Meeting. This motion was seconded by Hal with an amendment that the vote that occurred was 14 to 1 in favor of joining USA Rugby this year.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

1. **SWRRS Update from Guest Speaker Andy Avery**: Andy Avery from SW Referee Society gave an update on return to play and the referee society. On Sunday, the executive committee reviewed the USA Rugby Return to Play guidelines. Stage 5 notes normal training activities. The Referee Society is interpreting that as “pre-COVID.” Considered modified tackle 7s with no rucks or mauls. Younger referees wouldn’t be able to handle the modified state. Based on that, we felt touch rugby would be best state to move forward.

Jeff M. asked Andy if he was aware cities are allowing contact. Andy said Stage 5 is normal social activity. Jeff said he is confused by this since football is ok but not rugby. Andy said it’s the way they are interpreting the USA Rugby RTP guidelines.

Rob said we are in a gray area. Ali C. said subjective part is who decides where we are at. The question becomes what is “socially normal?” Ali asked what our criteria are for answering this question. Rob said they had a long conversation and many referees aren’t comfortable. He also mentioned what World Rugby is doing. Referees are close to the breakdowns so this is part of the decision matrix. Rob said in football, soccer, and other sports, referees can stay further away where in rugby refs are expected to be right at the action like scrums. What level are they comfortable with? Safer for the refs to ref touch rugby than contact.

Ali wants to know what criteria will make them feel safe. Andy said we aren’t wearing masks anymore and are further past COVID.

Jeff said that puts us waiting to play contact until next year. Risk of COVID is lower. Maybe USA Rugby comes up with a 4.5.

Andy wants to focus on the fall. There is an opportunity to do more is to have social matches in the fall that coaches manage. Then coaches decide what they are comfortable with. Refs who wanted to come out could.

Hal from Tempe said he wants to be more conservative. The fall for us is getting the cobwebs out. Based on the City of Tempe guidelines, Tempe has self-selected stage 4. Tempe is going to defer any contact until the spring. They will focus on skills and fitness. They are concerned about that single case where someone comes to practice, or a game is played where someone comes sick and two clubs are shut down as a result. For the fall, Tempe is planning to take it easy.

Jeff M. spoke about the three states playing football the longest. The average was 2 to 6 percent of games were postponed due to COVID. He said this gives us an idea of how this roles out in real time.

Angela said they didn’t come up with practice criteria. SW Referee Society will not sanction or assign refs for sanctioned events. Some refs can come out if they want to.

Ali said that everyone is making great points but she doesn’t get modified tackles. You eat steak or you don’t. She agrees that we need to put safety first. Ali said perhaps the refs need to come up with benchmarks. Also said we need that transparency. She things this is more psychologically damaging to have games scheduled and have to cancel them.

Jeff M. said there is a range of negative outcomes not tracked by data boards. Suicide, loss of business, recession, and other global issues. The cessation of rugby has been a major psychological blow to the kids. Red Mountain played in St. George at the end of August. The cessation of rugby has been huge for kids and we need to consider that. Kids in this age group are less likely to get it. Get less with flu. He pled to weigh the reality of risks against the results of not resuming rugby. Jeff asked if USA Rugby is issuing COIs. Taylor said they are. Jeff said we need to weigh the psychological impact of only playing touch.

Andy said insurance claims guide things. Just because we have COIs doesn’t mean we are at stage 5. Jeff M. said if the ref society doesn’t provide refs, we don’t have a league. Andy said the refs can social distance for touch but not contact.

Rob said high school players who have had programs that got shut down. Rob doesn’t want to play tackle in the fall.

Taylor liked the lowest common denominator that Rob brought up. Taylor said we parents, coaches, and players all are looking at what “good” looks like from Andy and the ref society.

1. **Vote for New DC Chair**: Mike Whetzel has formally resigned from the DC Chair position. Stephanie Dersham-Shoemaker has volunteered and has served as the D.C. prior in December 2017. **Angela motioned to appoint Stephanie to take on the DC role and the nomination was seconded by Jeff M.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

1. **Discussion and Vote on Stage of Return to Play:** Referencing USA Rugby’s Return to Play Stage Guidelines, determination of Rugby Arizona’s current RTP stage as a whole, with further discussion and determination by city. This will help inform our next steps on Return to Play. Please see <http://assets.usarugby.org/docs/medical/USAR-R2P.pdf?v=1603062346342> for USA Rugby RTP Guidelines as reference.

Harmen said he thinks we are in pretty good shape. He has gotten kids registered at practice to make it easier on parents. About 30 kids is what he has right now. The Wolves will play whatever they can. We’re probably stage 4. We’ll play touch or tackle. In Scottsdale, he reports they are in stage 4. Some football was cancelled there two weeks ago.

Taylor asked if masks and social distancing is normal.

Hans G. said that Salpointe will be returning in the Spring to play 15s. The interesting thing is the lawyers and insurance companies will determine what stage we’re in. Hans said USA Rugby needs to tell us. He said it’s not for us to determine where we’re at and that’s chicken shit. Taylor said USA Rugby told us to determine our stage at the local level.

Ali said she heard about Jeff M’s player. She said rugby is a big crutch. As far as North Valley goes, all of the club is ready to return to full tackle. She said she just has a girl’s squad so she hasn’t started rugby practice yet. She said she will look to the schools and that she is not a scientist. From research, she said it’s good enough for schools and businesses, police to resume “normal” activities. That’s where she is getting her benchmarks from. She said we are not in “pre-COVID” but we are stage 5 now and North Valley will do whatever the RAZ group decides to do. Looking at other experts, too. Schools are open, new numbers, biometrics of those cases. She said her subjective opinion is that we are in stage 5.

Jeff McIntyre said he is with Ali and Angela. He thinks we are in the “new normal” stage 5. He said virtually all aspects of “normal society” are back to normal aside from the limited numbers and masks. Parents and players are raring to go full tackle. He said they will be looking to do whatever this group decides. He said the boys are anxious to be on the field. He has high school, U16, and U14 for the fall.

Steve C said Brophy is at a standstill. He said they are getting more scouting and recruiting done in the fall. He expects Brophy will return to 15s in January but they will have to do what their school administration says. That where Brophy is at now.

Jeremy P said Scottsdale Wolves has high school girls that are ready to go. They will participate in whatever RAZ decides to do as a group.

Rob Speers said Central Phoenix is in Stage 4 territory. He said renting a field from a school requires temperature checks and masks. He said there is a lack of continuity to play safe tackle. Sunny Slope can’t come to practice for 10-14 days even though they have negative results. Phoenix is trying to be cautious. Some kids really want to play tackle. He said there are too many variables at play for high school to prepare kids for tackle on Nov. 7. What does modified tackle look like? Kids are going in at different levels is going to lead to injuries. Kids should be playing rugby for fun. At practice, Rob can achieve things and drive the kids through something. He said we should focus on making touch in the fall and playing contact in the spring. He hopes the numbers are going to continue to decline. Risking injury about fall contact with coaches. He said he’d rather preserve his players and build them up for contact in the spring. He said they still anticipate having numbers everywhere. He can move kids up from touch but can’t in contact.

Glenn B. said the EV Eagles are happy doing whatever. As for youth, he said he has a couple in each age group that want to play. He doesn’t know what that will look like if we play touch in the fall. He said he thinks we are at about 4.5 stage. He could be convinced of the “new normal” as well.

Jeff King said he is in a situation similar to Brophy. The Sahuarita superintendent just declared phase 4 for football. There are no restrictions. As far as contact and playing are concerned, they just started using rugby balls tonight. Nov. 7 would be a reach for Sahuarita as far as tackle is concerned but he has 25 high school boys and 16 high school girls and U16 girls. He said they are in stage 4.

Barry Gabbard of the Roosters said the parents are not cool with driving for two hours to play touch. Maybe just get the kids together when you guys are here in Tucson. If it’s touch, the Roosters are out. They might have a couple of kids that might come together to combine in Phoenix. We are closer to a 4.9 in Marana.

Sam said he is in the middle. He said Eclipse is going to be beholden to the rule makers. He said he leans more toward where Jeff is. He said that we need to stick to the lowest common denominator. He said he is at a 4.6 and has a couple of extremes in terms of not coming out but most kids can’t start soon enough. He said they have had 21 kids out in the first two weeks. He said he has his COI right away. He turned his documents into the City of Phoenix. He said we need to move forward but we have to do it towards the lowest common denominator. Touch is good for the fame no matter what you play but we have to focus on the lowest common denominator. He said he expects to get 40 to 50 players and may even have a U16 boys team.

Michael F. said the cities are starting to loosen up the rules for the number of spectators. Jujitsu are starting indoor tournaments next month. If they are moving ahead, we should, too.

Hal from Tempe said that Tempe has been focused on USAR RTP guidelines. He said Tempe opened on Oct. 15 and return to practice on Nov. 4, 2020, at all levels. He said they are chomping at the bit to get back to rugby. They understand different people believe different things. We’re at 4 teams for the fall. What Tempe is concerned about is that they need to get over the hump before we get to spring. Tempe feels we are at stage 4 and that we should do touch in the fall for U8 to U18. Tempe has boys teams but no girls teams. Just some co-ed rugby happening at practice right now. Tempe is being cautious and thoughtful for the fall. Hal thinks we are probably at 4.9 or a 5 for spring.

Angela from the Tucson Thunderbirds thinks that we are at a stage 4.9. She currently has 4-5 girls so will have to combine for the fall.

Yvette S. said the long travel time to play touch for those coming from Tucson is an issue. Kids will get a lot of games. The way we have the games structured, each team gets three matches. That’s good play time. As far as trainers go, they are not needed for touch rugby. It is about $210 for a trainer for the whole day. Most people want referees over athletic trainers. There is a flat fee for the refs if we want them. Elf and Yvette have been working on CIPP tutorial under resources page on the RAZ website. The other issue is RAZ is one of a few SGBs with emails being worked out by USAR. Elf is sending a list of emails that are not working with the USAR system. The annual paintball fundraising event is going to be held on Sunday, Nov. 29. 100 percent of the proceeds go towards fields. Volunteer is Rose M. Yvette welcomed Rose to the RAZ family.

Glenn B. had a question on registration. He wanted to know if we should have kids register for contact or non-contact. If non-contact, then should we upgrade to contact play in spring?

Yvette said we would need to increase registration fee for non-contact if that’s how people are planning to register. She said we would need to increase from $15 to $40 to cover our expenses.

Taylor said that it’s better for kids to register for contact due to the budget for the areas we are conducting play in.

**Harmen made a motion that we are at least a stage 4 in Arizona. This was seconded by Rob.**

Vote for the motion for current RTP stage per USA Rugby Guidelines:

Harmen- Yes

Hans G.- Yes

Ali- Yes

Jeff M.- Yes

Steve- Not Present (Left Call)

Rob- Yes

Glenn- Yes

Jeff K.- Yes

Barry- Yes

Sam- Yes

Hal- Yes

Angela- Yes

**The motion passes unanimously.**

Taylor said that cities will have staff stopping by the fields to check on COVID compliance.

1. **Discussion and Vote on Return to Play**: There was discussion about return to play at the Sept. 22 Special General meeting.

**Harmen made a motion to return to play starting Nov. 7 playing a four-week season of touch. The motion was seconded by Rob S.**

Vote for the motion for return to play with fall touch season starting Nov. 7, 2020:

Harmen- Yes

Hans G.- Yes

Ali- Yes

Jeff M.- Yes

Steve- Not Present (Left Call)

Rob- Yes

Glenn- Yes

Jeff K.- Yes

Barry- Yes

Sam- Yes

Hal- Not Present (Left Call)

Angela- Yes

**The motioned passes unanimously.**

Angela asked Rob when referee society might have next meeting to give us benchmarks for stage 5. We left it at our executive committee conversation.

Taylor said Andy Avery might be able to get back to us before Nov. 7, 2020. USAR Youth and High School meeting is tomorrow.

Rob wanted to know what form of touch we want to play. Rob backs FIT touch. OJ’s email is useful to reflect on.

Sam also likes FIT touch.

Ali said she thinks it’s also how we as coaches sell touch to the kids and parents. She said how we as coaches and leaders paint it will determine how the players look at touch. She is just concerned that the referee society won’t give us referees. There are positive things we can focus on.

Taylor asked Rob to chair a subcommittee to determine form of touch that we will play for the fall.

1. **Call for Other Business**: As needed, announcements, etc. There were none.
2. **Determine date, time, and location for next RAZ general membership meeting**: As needed.
3. **Adjournment**:

Taylor moved to adjourn at 10:17 p.m. and the motion was seconded by Angela.