

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes: September 7, 2023

Next Scheduled Meeting: October 5, 2023

Present:

- Noah Currier – President
- Dr. Michael Cottingham – VP1
- Amy Bohn – Head of Classification
- Jen Allred – Lakeshore/USAWR
- Cyndy Ellis – Classifier
- Marianne Duda – Head of Referees
- Mary Kiolbasa – Classifier
- Daniel Curtis – VP2
- Dan Caldwell – Secretary
- Bob Lopez - Commissioner

Absent:

- Sarah Leonard - Treasurer

Approval of minutes: Dr. Michael Cottingham motioned to approve past meeting minutes, all approved unanimously

Lakeshore/USAWR – Jen Allred

- Jen's email is not on the current distribution list so we will add her back
- Camp happening now – started yesterday
- 16 regulars and 8 who went through the application process, will have 6 coaches here throughout that time
- At the end of this camp, they will make an announcement for the Parapan games
- Next major selection camp 12/11 – 12/17
 - Open app process 10/15, due 10/25 (very limited info that they will need to provide)
 - Will it be appropriate to send an email to the league to share? Jen will type something up and we will send out to membership
 - Will whittle it down to 40
 - Will name Paralympic team by May of 2024
 - Daniel asked if athletes who apply get rejected based on their ability? She said yes, there are 40 spots open and based on the number of applicants, it is possible not everyone will be invited
 - There are some folks who get automatic invites (based on past participation)
- Will be going to Paris for Rugby World Cup

Classification – Amy Bohn, Cyndy Ellis, Mary Kiolbasa

- Cyndy Ellis:
 - The database is essentially built
 - Currently in the testing phase
 - There are still issues, but working through that

- Very excited as it will be clean data!
- Hope to have it up and running by October
- All old data will have to be manually entered by Cyndy due to the way the old database was written
- Dr. Cottingham asked if there had been any movement on Lakeshore's contribution to the costs. They have the money set aside and Jen will get with Sarah to make that move with the money.
- Amy:
 - Will we send the link to classifiers to complete SafeSport? Yes, currently still in conversation with SafeSport how that will work
 - We will work on setting up emails for the classifiers with USWRA emails – will be password protected and secure
 - Will be working on the Google Drive to make it as protected as possible for athletes to host their information
 - Cyndy will be managing the database and she will have a backup and there will be a specific email for that as well
 - Reaching out to tournament directors to get trainings set up
 - Not sure how many panels she can staff until she sees who is on what teams
 - Can't have a lower panel at tournaments where training is taking place in order to make sure that new classifiers are being trained at higher levels
 - Had a conversation with Jen and they are going to look at dates for next summer for training and will move to WWR rules then
 - Are hoping to create an online course to begin with training
 - USA athletes – have been a few situations. If there are questions about international VS US classification, please make sure to send those questions to Amy. Please don't have those conversations at tournaments.
 - In international play, the head of classification reviews all rosters prior to tournaments. Moving forward, Amy would like to follow that protocol. That would mean that the Head of Classification or Associate Head of Classification would review each roster prior to play. Dr. Cottingham. said he would support the policy.
 - Once Associate Head of Classification is in place, they would like to put their minors' policy, code of ethics and conflict of interest in place. Will ask Gary Pate to look over these documents.
 - Jen will ask USOPC what their policy
 - Bob will ask Move United what their policy is
 - Amy reminded them that they need it to be specific to Classification due to the health information
 - Must have something in place by the first weekend of November or they will not classify
 - Working on the logo so they can get some updated clothing
- Mary
 - Made updates on the injury screening that had been suggested
 - Still working on the concussion one
 - Is Wellness going to meet again to look over them?
 - Would like to have in place prior to the first tournament
 - Dr. Cottingham will get Wellness together to take care of that

Referees – Marianne Duda

- Just got back from Low Point Nationals
- Redoing structuring for refs and getting rid of levels
 - The rates that are there will be restructured – all refs will now be paid \$50 per game
 - Head officials will now get a separate payment on top of games fees for bigger tournaments (Nationals and PVA, anything over 14 – 16 teams)
 - Evaluator fee will not be paid by the tournament – they will be paid through the award the referees were granted
- In conversation with Sarah regarding reimbursement – thinking of possibly looking at getting their own 501c3 so would like a copy of the DNO insurance to see if that is something they would be able to manage on their own
- It is going to be a very busy season and hopes membership is patient and recognizes there are many new officials and there will learning curves
- Dr. Cottingham would like the referee fees included in the same email with other information so the membership doesn't get hammered with emails
- Dr. Cottingham asked how the matrix is going to look now that levels have been removed – Marianne said it won't technically work that way, it will be having more evaluators out, recommendations from RAC's, known officials, depth of tournament
- Dr. Cottingham asked if Marianne had an idea of what this would cost hosts based on the past and she said the change would be very minimal. We were the only league who had different levels and paid different amounts as such.
- Working on the formula of how many games a referee should ref in a day, as opposed to a weekend, knowing that Friday and Saturdays are busier than Sundays
- Jen said a good bullet point to include in the email we will send to membership is that the expectation of the host is to support and respect the referees and classifiers, and Marianne said to also respect the decisions of the Head Official, RACs, etc.
- Amy asked if there was a formal procedure for complaints for the refs? Marianne said that we make the Head Official known at a tournament and that is where the complaints go.

Commissioner – Bob Lopez

- Low point season finished up – went well. Attended all 4 tournaments. Refeed 2 and attended the other 2.
- Would like to sit down with some of the participants to see how we could improve some things.
- Hoping to see more teams next year. Also would like to see about moving the date of the Nationals back 1 weekend.
- Spoke to WWAR about 2024 Nationals. They already have 1 or 2 big sponsors and have some more lined up. Plans to meet with them monthly.
- Semis have been more of a challenge but are working on getting those set
- Conflict of Interest Policy - we need to formally adopt a Conflict of Interest Policy!
- The 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China will include Low Point Wheelchair Rugby! The WWR has asked Bob to chair the committee that will determine the qualifications for The 2025 World Games. This means decisions regarding whether or not Team USA

players can play on the USWRA Low Point National team needs to be decided sooner rather than later. To qualify for The 2025 World Games, the USWRA Low Point National team will need to play in a qualifying tournament between now and February 2025.

- Registration is open – have been reviewing player transfers
- Will be confirming RACs for the season shortly – would like them to take on a bigger role
- Will be soliciting at-large members of the competition committee
- Marianne asked if we had considered having a volunteer who would want to take on social media. Bob said it is a work in progress. We have to manage who has access.
- There was some talk of Junior Board Members who might be able to be “assigned” to board members to assist with their responsibilities.
- We no longer have any rugby balls for sale as our inventory has run out. There is some conversation about what logos should be on it but Bob thinks we should put the USWRA logo on them so we can get them out.
- Mary asked about the Slack information she sent and whether that was something we wanted to run with. Bob said it is on his list and he appreciates the info she sent.
- Noah spoke about the balls – can we determine what logo we want on them? Who will be paying for those? Also the logoed apparel, we are at a point that the league can start making some money. Do we want to stay with the same items we have or add things?
 - Bob thinks that is a bigger conversation that we need to have with the treasurer present
 - He thinks it should happen sooner than our board meeting
 - Dr. Cottingham would also like to have Daniel on the call since he is taking over fundraising for the short term
 - Daniel asked if we could produce apparel that does not have the Oscar Mike logo on it. Noah doesn’t think that is something you could get anywhere. Daniel thinks at the end of the day that is the bigger question because some may want to buy something with USWRA on it and not the Oscar Mike logo. Oscar Mike will not produce the shirts without the OM logo on them. Noah said he doesn’t think he has ever been asked that before. The discussion can be taken further. Daniel has his thoughts, but thinks he needs to speak on behalf of the membership. Jen said they had been asked about that, and they explained it as Oscar Mike is a manufacturer as opposed to the team/entity. Dan said if it were “tagged” OM as opposed to “branded” OM, it would be a different story.
 - Dr. Cottingham would be comfortable with Noah, Sarah, Bob and Daniel getting together as far as branding for the league and setting some standards.
 - Amy said if they can’t get a large variety of things, perhaps we look at two suppliers.
 - With regards to the balls, who will be purchasing them?

VP1 – Dr. Michael Cottingham

- Will be revising a sponsorship packet in collaboration with students and Daniel
- Would like to create an inventory of photos that makes it easy to search for and access them
 - Noah said the league can have access to all photos Oscar Mike has
- Going to get Safety Committee together in the next few weeks

- Gary Pate was very in support of the Conflict of Interest and he said in the future you may want to have team reps, referees and classifiers sign them as well
 - If Sarah wants to send the one she created he would motion to move forward with that
 - Daniel & Bob seconded
 - All were in agreement
 - Marianne asked for clarification – will they be expected to sign? Dr. Cottingham said yes, in the in the future as they would like to change the wording beforehand. Referees do not have anything in place at this time. Perhaps later in the season the officials can look at it and see what wording may need to be changed.
 - Classifiers ARE going to do their own COI this season
 - Our COI should also have noted who is going to review and manage this in the event a question comes up. Jen said when theirs got reviewed, you have to document on every form that it has been reviewed, so you have to have a review process in place.

VP2 – Daniel Curtis

- Project Kix – based in Miami.
 - It is a shoe drive
 - Could send out to team reps
 - Would be a club based fundraising opportunity.
 - Once collected, Project Kix will make arrangements to have them shipped and the teams can make money that way
 - Carolina did it all last season Marianne reported
 - 90% would go to the individual club and 10% would go to the league
 - Marianne asked for clarification – since Carolina has been doing it would they be obligated to donate back to the league. Daniel thinks we can be incredibly flexible. He is even fine with all of the money going back to the teams the first couple of years as it grows.
 - Do we email team reps or membership?
 - Bob thinks team reps and post on Social Media
 - Bob does NOT think we should give all the money to the teams, and should take at least 5%. Daniel said we should make an exemption for Carolina given that they have done it.
 - Dr. Cottingham said we have raised a lot of fees and we need to engender some goodwill and is fine giving all of the money back to the teams.
 - Dan gave some statistics on how Project Kix went in FL and the money that the Miami team raised. They raised \$15,000 in Miami with one guy managing it himself.
 - Dan agrees with the 90/10 split.
 - One of the things that was talked about when Sarah was starting this conversation with Low Point was how much has to be collected prior to sending them in. We need to get more details with the logistics.
 - They will be doing two Zoom calls which we can encourage people to attend and also record and post
- Another 50,000 to spend from Nielsen

- Apps are ready to send out
- Send to team reps and post on social
- Ready to send as soon as tomorrow
- Deadline of 10/31/23
- Dr. Cottingham has students who will be working with Daniel
 - Daniel did some deep digging in Monday.com
 - Lots of great leads there, but no real content to work with
 - Going to try to carry on with what was started
 - Revitalized sponsorship package that is perhaps a little less aggressive
 - Will take coordination with post season hosts
 - More to come on some low hanging fruit
- Trulieve
 - Reached out to us
 - Cannabis company
 - Had a great conversation
 - They would like to give us a large chunk of money
 - Have to be careful due to the fact that players who participate also play for the Paralympic teams
 - Daniel said it is important to think of it in terms of medical as opposed to recreational
 - Daniel let them know the messaging would be very important
 - Dr. Cottingham said he is perfectly fine with supporting as long as lawyer says we are good with it
 - He says he would treat it the same as an alcohol sponsor
 - Bob said that the last time we talked about it there was discussion about minors being in the league
 - Amy also said the last time we talked about it Bob was talking to some other reps from teams and what their sponsoring organization would say.
 - Keith from Magee said their organization was looking to partner with a cannabis company themselves so they would be fine with it.
 - Mary said another conversation that was had the last time was that perhaps it would be state-by-state and possibly tournament-by-tournament. It would need to be signed off on by an attorney to make sure we were good to go.
 - Daniel said that was all good information.
 - There are a lot of questions that we may not have all the answers to.
 - Bottom line is that it is an opportunity
 - Noah said the reason OM has turned down that opportunity with any company like that is because of their other sponsors who may not agree
 - Jen says it is a conundrum for a couple of reasons:
 - One is the minors involved in the league
 - The other is our 501c3 and tax perspective
 - She has asked where she is and it may put the national athletes in a weird place due to what they sign with USADA
 - Daniel said the person he spoke with at the company has been completely open and fine with any restrictions we may need to put in place
 - Jen asked if they might be able to provide a redacted contract they have with another sports league so we could review

- Bob asked who we could go to try to get answers for the league
- Dr. Cottingham says we really only need one person to tell us we can take the money (such as a tax attorney)
- Mary said as far as a tax lawyer – we should circle back to Sarah since she has been having conversations with them
- Mary said we would also need to be very specific with the marketing/messaging regarding the legalities related

Dan:

- Registration updates:
 - 81 athletes
 - 41 staff members
 - 9 teams

Open Business:

- Daniel asked if the registration asks for diagnosis for grant purposes – yes, we can pull that data if needed and supply it