**Rugby Arizona SYRO**

**Special General Meeting of the Executive Committee**

**Draft Meeting Minutes**

**Date**: Wednesday, March 3, 2021

**Time**: 8:30 pm

**Location**: Zoom (See email with link)

1. **Call to Order**: President Taylor Miller called the meeting to order at 8:35 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:

-Rose Marascio (Executive Director)

-Fitu Pauga (Management Team Member- Youth Commissioner)- Tempe

-Jeff McIntyre (Management Team Member- High School Boys Commissioner)- Red Mountain

-Glen Baugmath- East Valley Eagles

-Sam Kelly- Eclipse

-Allison Crosby- North Valley Scorpions (arrived late at 9:35 p.m.)

-Kevin Harris- Northern Arizona RFC

-Rob Speers- Phoenix Firebirds Rugby Club

-Harmen Tjaarda- Scottsdale Wolves Rugby Club

-Hal Morgan- Tempe Rugby Club

-Barry Gabbard- Tucson Roosters

-Angela Wagner-Gabbard- Tucson Thunderbirds

-Ted Brandt (non-voting member of Scottsdale Wolves)

1. **New Executive Director:** Rose was introduced by Taylor as the new executive director for RAZ. Rose spoke and introduced herself. She thanked us for bringing her onboard and touched on RAZ goals.
2. **Candidates for Girl’s Rugby Commissioner:** Elf introduced the three candidates to fill the vacancy for RAZ Girl’s Commissioner as follows: Danielle Borie, Tiffany Fitzpatrick, and Emeline Latu.

Tiffany spoke first: She just moved with her family from Washington and her daughter has four years of rugby. She spent years volunteering with cheerleading and organizing community events, coordinating games, and is really good at coordination for fundraisers as well. She plans on being in the rugby world for the next 9 to 10 years. She said she is a fast learner. She said she would do her absolute best if selected for the role of girl’s commissioner. She was a pharmacy tech.

Danielle spoke second: She is the president of the women’s team at ASU. She works with kids. When asked how she would handle difficult situations with parents, coaches, and other adults, she said she has some experience in staying calm and neutral. She is a senior at ASU and played before there was a girls’ team. Hal asked if she graduates in May. She said she plans on staying in Arizona for one year. She will have a double major in psychology and Spanish.

Emeline spoke third: She is a native of Arizona. She is a football and volleyball mom. Her daughter is in her second season of playing rugby. She wants to advocate for the girls in Arizona. She has a background in private education. Hal asked what her approach was to handling conflict. Barry asked if she could remain unbiased if her daughter was involved. She said she is the oldest of 11 children and has a bossy nature. She said she will focus on what is best for the team not just her daughter. She said she can be very fair.

Sam asked who Tiffany and Emeline’s daughters play for. Emeline’s daughter plays for the U16 Scottsdale Wolves and Tiffany’s daughter plays for the North Valley Scorpions.

After the candidates left the call, there was discussion by membership. Kevin said he liked Emeline when it came to working with parents, conflict resolution, volleyball skills, etc. since it really is about the kids. Angela liked Emeline as she seems to have more of a sports background. Ted said Emeline does really care about the girls. He said she’s a class act and is the best choice. Jeff said she was a standout from the resumes. He said for him it is a no-brainer.

Taylor motioned to vote for Emeline for the next girl’s commissioner. The vote passes unanimously for Emeline as the new girl’s commissioner for Rugby Arizona.

1. **Interim DC Chair:** Taylor said Elf will serve as the interim DC chair until the next annual general meeting. He said for those interested in submitting their candidacy at the AGM for the upcoming year, this position requires a thick skin.
2. **Discussion of RAZ waiver process:** Taylor introduced the issue. He shared the current waiver process with a PowerPoint slide. The waiver process definition. He said there are two things to consider as follows:
3. Two arm-banded approach- No matter the weight or skill set, each team could have two arm-banded players
4. Skill set dictates division- At the right age level and look at skill set

Each person was given two minutes to share their thoughts.

Jeff McIntyre- I think the process we have is good. It’s not perfect but no system is. Viewing of player upon waiver request with DC and other eyes is important. Review of our process to ensure it’s robust. Tension between the DC and clubs on this issue. Skill set does matter. You can have a player that really does need to move up. With that, it can create a safety issue. At Red Mountain, we almost always choose to play a player up. We do that proactively.

Hal Morgan- I trust the process. As long as the group uses the criteria we have identified to come to a consensus. Skill set does matter.

Glen Baugmath- Parents and coaches are yelling at him. Tackles have been fair. It’s been a matter of physics. I go with skill set.

Sam Kelly- Only has ever waivered four players down in all of his years as a coach. Doesn’t make sense with what we have. It keeps morphing. It’s a pretty simple process to it. We keeping pushing the nth degree. We ignore the things that hurt and push the things that don’t help. We seem to be dealing with anomalies. If we can only have two armbands, I don’t have enough players. Skill set does matter. Truly make this about the kids.

Newt Knutson- DC look over the waivers? Taylor explained it’s in the bylaws: waivers are reviewed by the DC, ED, and division representative.

Kevin Harris- Skill set.

Rob Speers- He has been on the front lines of this and we need to focus on the intent of this. My opinion is we are age grade rugby first. We also want to look at safety. The number was only ever a starting place to give a safe environment in a contact sport. The process is meant to be led by the commissioner with that age level. I had issue with the DC arbitrarily running things. A collaborative approach needs to happen. The goal and the intent is to keep the kids in their age group. Playing a player up should be a decision made by the coach. A lot of times, kids come with friends. We potentially lose players. These are all things youth commissioner has to care for. We need to provide a positive environment. This season, we swung the needle too far.

Harmen Tjaarda- Skill plays a factor. It’s the team’s responsibility to see that. Safety is the biggest factor. Some kids can throw their weight around, dominate, and can lead to a safety issue. It’s both weight and skill. We need to trust the process and move on.

Barry Gabbard- We need common sense. You can’t look at a one game. We need to talk to coaches. I can see it refereeing games and watching games. It removes the dynamic of team when a dominating player is moved up. There needs to be an ongoing process. We can’t just look at one week. We’ve lost common sense. We need to get back to “Hey, this is kid’s rugby.” We have all got recruiting issues this year. Make it easier on us. The group between U12 and U14 you need more buy in. We need to be talking more with each other as clubs.

Ali Crosby- My biggest thing is consistency. It’s frustrating if one week we follow it and the next we’re not.

Fitu- This hasn’t been easy over the years. Coaching Tempe for years, we have some big kids. I know what my kids can do. Although skill level is important to review. Like Barry said, we need to use common sense. Moving one kid can destroy a whole team. With arm bands, let kids play at their own age. We still need a process. We have a review board, not just one person. I think we need these three people to review it and get a proper evaluation.

Angela- We need to look at players holistically so skill set does matter.

Taylor said he was going to call for a vote with regard to allowing two waivered players regardless of skillset, but clearly the majority of voices at the meeting believe skill plays a role so he will not call for a vote. He said we need to look at the verbiage in the AGM meeting. We could add collaborating with coaches as part of the process if we like. It is safety focused and skill matters from what everyone here said. Coaches can file an appeal. We need to address and clarify the appeal process.

To discuss the matter further, a waiver subcommittee was formed with initial volunteer members with Vice President Dave Thomas selected to preside over the first meeting of the subcommittee until a committee chair has been selected. The waiver subcommittee will collaborate, review current protocol, and return with a recommendation on the waiver process.

1. **Discussion of Spring Season:** Taylor went over tentative spring calendar. April 10 is the semifinals for the youth with finals on April 17, 2021.

Sam said Peoria is now open again. Angela said Pima County Board of Supervisors is meeting tomorrow to decide about what is happening with its fields.

1. **COVID Return to Play Protocol:** Taylor reminded us that we need to wear masks, etc.

Jeff M. said he’s the spokesman on his team. We can say to people to do this but there’s a limit to what we can make people do.

1. **Recent Travel Requests:** Some travel requests have been submitted (Tempe/OC Raptors, SD Mustangs). Those have been approved.

Angela asked everyone to let us know about girl’s teams coming, too.

1. **General Discussions:** There was discussion that at the end of May, look at evening hours for play to get out of the heat. We need to shift to night hours in May to avoid the heat. Taylor will contact field holders about availability.

The AGM date is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, June 26, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 10:19 p.m.