

Board Meeting Minutes

American Go Association

Meeting Date and Time: November 17, 2019, 7:00 pm EDT

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Overview

In Attendance

Lisa Scott (Chair, Central Region Rep)
Devin Frazee (Central Region Rep)
Chris Kirschner (Western Region Rep)
Chris Saenz (Western Region Rep)
Gurujeet Khalsa (Eastern Region Rep)
Dan Ritter (Eastern Region Rep)
Paul Celmer (At-Large Rep)
Andy Okun (President)
Andrew Jackson (Executive VP)
Samantha Fede (Secretary)

Summary

The AGA board of directors discussed several initiatives and their long-term priority of making go more mainstream. They passed motions to create a system for the AGA to provide limited financial support to develop/maintain tournaments, and established a scholarship fund to make US Go Congress more affordable. They also discussed implementing an improved format for the North American Masters Tournament, held at Go Congress each year, based on feedback from strong players. Andy Okun provided his President's Report, including an update on work towards a North American Go Federation, which the board approved.

Actionable Motions Passed

1. The board moves to approve the creation of a North American Go Federation, pending final documentation
2. The board moves to approve this framework (see below) for the committee to implement a process that determines how the AGA provide a limited amount of financial support for the development and maintenance of tournaments.
3. The board moves to approve this proposal creating a Scholarship Fund. The concise proposal wording is as follows (with further information as relayed by the proposal): The AGA should create a Scholarship Fund for the US Go Congress, which would allow the AGA to make the event more appealing to folks in certain groups for whom price may be a limiting factor on their attending the US Go Congress.

Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order (7:11 EDT)
2. Approval of Minutes ([September minutes available here](#))
3. Gurjeet motioned, Paul seconded, unanimous, September minutes approved
4. President's Report
 - a. North American Go Federation Update
 - i. Update on this progress; documents are not yet ready although draft form is available.
 - ii. **Gurjeet moves to approve pending final documents, Devin seconds, approved unanimously.**
 - b. Appointment of VP of Development
 - i. Informal notice of Stephanie Yin serves as VP of Development (fundraising and sponsorships). Will give official, written notice after development of the job description in the coming weeks.
 - ii. Gurjeet: Will this just have an international scope [per Andy Okun's description of her anticipated work with China.
 - iii. Andy Okun: She's very hard working, and has already gotten some sponsors for Go in NY.
 - iv. Devin: What will be the term limit on this position?
 - v. Andy/Lisa: Two years.
 - c. Treasurer Duties Update
 - i. Danny Ko's term is up, so he's no longer doing this work. He's very busy and gave us ample notice. I can cover basic functions for a while but hopefully not forever.
 - ii. It's good for us to be aware of what is involved. He put in a lot of work, more hours than I anticipated, because it's to a high standard and includes entering each individual join/renew into our quickbooks account. I'm looking into seeing if we can instead auto-calculate it from the membership manager perspective.

Chris K: It should be easy from a programming perspective.

Andy O: I'm concerned from an auditor perspective, mostly, so I'd like to consult someone first.
 - iii. Plead to the board to find someone to be our treasurer and/or bookkeeper.

Devin: I think we should hire a bookkeeper.

Lisa: We've started looking into it.

Andy: We may be required to have routine auditing, which may influence our CPA choice. But it depends on whether we think we're a charitable organization. Which, I don't think we are based on previous exchanges. But I'd like to have a CPA review our 9-90s before we submit them

- d. New Jersey Open: The planned organizer fell through, I've been unable to identify a new person as of yet, but I'm still working on it. I also have no updates regarding the Masters format.
 - i. Gurujeet: Does that mean that [Richard Mott] is not interested in running the NJ Open again?
 - ii. Andy: He's provided information but I think he was disheartened by the loss of a previous venue. I will reach out to him again.
 - iii. Devin: I have interviewed the previous organizers and I would like to take on the role as the organizer for the NJ Open.
 - iv. Andy: Okay, I'll reach out to you later.

- 5. Ongoing Business items from September 2019 Meeting
 - a. NJ Open Status (AO)
 - b. Presentation on establishing conditions for AGA support of tournaments (CK, DR, DF)
 - i. Presentation on establishing conditions for AGA support of tournaments
 - 1. The proposal is available [below](#).
 - ii. **Chris K. moves to approve this framework (see below) for the committee to develop a process that determines how the AGA will provide a limited amount of financial support for the development and maintenance of major tournaments with the intent to begin program in quarter 1 2020 after final approval at Feb meeting. Devin seconds.**
 - iii. Chris K: We need to turn the items into specifics to develop an application form.
 - iv. Andy Okun: Briefly, I think it seems straightforward.
 - v. Lisa Scott: Is there a minimum-maximum range for this sort of application?
 - vi. Chris K: We have a maximum budget of \$5000, but the awards could range from \$100 for small tournaments, and we've discussed up to \$2000 for the NJ open.
 - vii. Dan: What we are most looking for is if we are missing anything major, so that we don't discover we missed something important when we flesh out the framework
 - viii. Paul: Is \$5000 sufficient for a year if we have big tournaments requesting \$2000?
 - ix. **Motion passes unanimously.**
 - c. President's Proposal for alternative formats for Masters tournament (AO)
 - i. Andy: I have nothing more to add right now, we can work on this via email.

- ii. Lisa: Anything for 2020 needs to be done sooner rather than later.
- d. Congress Financials: Creation of Scholarship Fund (LS)
- i. The proposal is available [below](#).
 - ii. Lisa: See also the appendix with more financial history details [not available in the minutes].
 - iii. Paul: Will this overlap with the AGF directive?
 - iv. Lisa: Potentially, but it's designed to catch those, for example, between 18-26 who aren't eligible for AGF supplements.
 - v. **Devin: I move to approve this proposal creating a Scholarship Fund, seconded by Gurujeet. The concise proposal wording is as follows (with further information as relayed by the proposal): The AGA should create a Scholarship Fund for the US Go Congress, which would allow the AGA to make the event more appealing to folks in certain groups for whom price may be a limiting factor on their attending the US Go Congress.**
 - vi. Gurujeet: How will this be administered?
 - vii. Lisa: We have a proposed temporary committee and then a permanent structure after the first few years.
 - viii. Chris K: Is this going to be a class based thing?
 - ix. Lisa: We won't do "means testing". But, the program is targeting 18-26 youth, teachers, maybe retired people etc.
 - x. Chris K: From an accounting perspective, how will this work? Will the AGA reimburse the Congress or...
 - xi. Lisa: We've focused mostly on dividing the surplus where after a certain profit threshold, the surplus will be divided to between the AGA, local organizer, and this fund.
 - xii. Chris K: How will this be applied going forward?
 - xiii. Lisa: For the first year, we'd set some amount, i.e., \$8000 and run it as a pilot program, see the interest.
 - xiv. Chris K: But what if we underestimate the number of claimants?
 - xv. Lisa: Our guess is based on demographics.
 - xvi. Chris K: 5% off won't help anyone.
 - xvii. Andy Okun: I think having to eat \$8000, or an equivalent amount, would be a loss we'd be willing to take.
 - xviii. Gurujeet: We could do a first-come first-serve basis.
 - xix. Chris K: That seems reasonable. We need more details before we can approve.
 - xx. Lisa: We don't have the timeline for that if we want it implemented before the next congress. The board needs to approve the general concepts, and then the committee can work on the details.
 - xxi. Devin: I agree, the board doesn't need to be involved in operational level things.

- xxii. Gurujeet: I think there are two things here, the creation of the fund and the MOU itself.
- xxiii. Lisa: We'll be discussing congress next meeting. But, the MOU is more of an operating document that the Board will receive copies of.
- xxiv. Andy Okun: We could also break it down into group, but I'm fine with moving ahead with giving the committee discretion for the details
- xxv. Dan: I agree the committee should have discretion, maybe with the caveat of needing changes to the general budget approved.
- xxvi. Paul: Maybe we could just try to make Congress cheaper? I don't want to take surplus away from the hard working congress team.
- xxvii. Lisa: It's optional, they have to opt-in.
- xxviii. Chris K: And the congress doesn't incur a cost itself.
- xxix. Lisa: Correct, they pay a portion of their surplus forward. The current congress directors are in support of this.
- xxx. Chris K: I don't think opt-out is a good idea. It will sow seeds of discontent, if in a few years someone chooses not to opt-in.
- xxxi. Lisa: I think we can say, if you don't share your surplus, you don't get scholarship money.
- xxxii. Chris K: We shouldn't take it away from people.
- xxxiii. Devin: I think we should go with it as is, and deal with problems in the unlikely chance someone is more selfish with the funds.
- xxxiv. Paul: Why can't the AGA fund this?
- xxxv. Lisa: People are uncomfortable with congress directors keeping \$40,000 surpluses, and want to put it back into future congresses. But we need to allow some sort of cushion so that's why we need to allow for surpluses.
- xxxvi. **Chris K: I propose an amendment that makes this a permanent policy with no opt-outs. (no seconds)**
- xxxvii. **[Regarding the original motion]**
Ayes: Lisa, Gurjeet, Chris S, Devin, Dan
Chris K: Abstain
Paul: Nay
Motion passed.

e. Search Updates

- i. **Chris K. moves to executive session to discuss personnel issues, Gurjeet seconds, enter executive session at 8:30 EDT.**
- ii. **Executive session ends at 8:57 EDT**
[Chris Saenz departs meeting]

6. Goals and Long-Term Planning Discussion

- a. [The board brainstormed ideas ahead of the meeting in a google doc, not available in the minutes]

- b. Desired result: focus on 1-year plan for this year, and conversation to support 5- or 10-year plan, to be solidified by the November 2020 meeting
 - i. Devin: We should wait for a larger time for the more long term plans. First we need a unified vision.
 - ii. Gurujeet: Just focusing on projects to get off our plate doesn't seem like the purpose of this discussion.
 - iii. Andy Okun: We have a general goal of becoming a more professional organization, some progress have been made in terms of working towards hiring a bookkeeper and CPA.
 - iv. [Discussion of collecting more data]
 - v. Devin: But what are our long-term goals? Is our goal to keep people happy [maybe], make money [no], increase membership [maybe] etc.
 - vi. Andy: Personally, I think we're trying to improve the community for our membership. Increasing membership could contribute to that.
 - vii. Chris k: But data analytics are important, and it's important to have access to our data.
- c. **Proposed 1-year plan**
 - i. Projects well underway
 - 1. Investing reserve funds
 - 2. Partially centralizing and improving the management of Congress
 - a. Congress Survey
 - ii. Projects Started
 - 1. Change how the treasurer functions, including splitting the task among several people (discussed during the president's report)
 - 2. Hiring an executive administrator
 - iii. Projects Not Yet Started
 - 1. Redo the AGA organization chart and implement it (mentioned but to be focused on at the next meeting)
 - 2. Developing 5 and 10 year plans that are about marketing and vision
 - a. Goal for this to be ready to go by Nov 2020
 - 3. Deciding how to move forward with integrating membership (transaction) management and treasurer functioning (discussed during the president's report)
 - 4. Marketing go better – we have a new VP of Development (discussed during the president's report)
- d. Devin: What should the overarching goals or vision of our organization be?
 - i. Samantha: I think it's important to have *some* goal. There are many admirable paths, but we need to agree to have a working goal. Everyone has good ideas here, but structuring our efforts towards a goal is important.
 - ii. Chris K: I'd like to see Go become a popular game in the US.

- iii. Lisa: What motivates me is helping people find and enjoy the opportunity to play go.
- iv. Devin: I'd like to see Go become the most played board game in the US.
- v. Gurujeet: I think what everyone is saying, and I agree, is that we should try to become more mainstream.
- vi. Paul: I was really inspired by seeing people playing go in parks in Korea. It's everywhere. I feel like that should be what we're working towards.
- vii. Chris: Some of this is very high level. Is this not more in the role of the AGF? We have a responsibility to our membership to provide tournaments. Maybe we can activate the membership.
- viii. Andrew: I'd like more in-person rated games.
- ix. Devin: It sounds like our general goal then is to make go more mainstream while keeping our core membership happy.
- x. Devin: I think the details of implementing this are at a lower level exec issue.
- xi. Samantha: But if we want to make sure this happens, we can't keep doing what we're doing *more*. We need to do something different, like paid advertisements or feature in a movie or tv show, like hikaru no go
- xii. Andy: The issue isn't just money, it's having the people with the interest and expertise to carry out our goals. If we had millions of dollars, I don't know if we'd know how to spend it to achieve these things.
- xiii. Chris K: If someone asked me what I could do if I could do anything, I'd like go to be in all schools.
- xiv. Devin: We need to follow a stricter goal structure.
- xv. Andy Okun: What I'm hearing is that we want to prioritize getting our regular business list done and work on these larger overarching goals as a separate thing.
- xvi. Lisa: We need realistic actionable goals, though. I like the structure proposed by Devin but I'm not sure that it will produce the measurable progress we're looking for.
- e. Finalization of goals for 2020
 - i. The board approved (by voice) the above list of 2020 goals as a first step.
 - ii. The board discussed finalizing and continuing to improve on this goals document offline.
- f. Chris K moves to formally compliment the chair's organization and preposting of the minutes, general seconding and approval.**

7. Adjourn

Devin moves to adjourn the meeting, Chris seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:01pm EDT.

Board Meeting Schedule for 2019-2020

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Written Reports</u>	<u>This Year Supplemental Issues</u>
Sept. 8, 2019	Fall Meeting	Phone	Tournaments, Games, Rules, Ranks and Ratings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual Tournament Calendar 2. Report on Games and Tournaments Played 3. Report on Pro Play 4. Minutes of Prior Meeting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pair Go Rules 2. Pro System Restart 3. Proposal on Major Tournaments and Rewards 4. Proposal regarding New Jersey Open
Nov. 17, 2019	Strategy "Retreat"	Phone	Long view of the organization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategy Memo 2. Minutes of Prior Meeting 	
Feb. 23, 2020	Winter Meeting	Phone	Admin, Communications, Congress, Staff, Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roster of Positions and Staff 2. Reappointments List 3. Minutes of Prior Meeting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher Program
May 17, 2020	Spring Meeting	Phone	Budget, Investments, International Affairs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preliminary financials 2. Investment report 3. Budget 4. Report of the VP of IR 5. Minutes of Prior Meeting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposed reworking of membership categories, as noticed in 2019 Chapter Assembly Meeting
Aug. 7, 2020	Congress Meeting	YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, CO	Financial Position, Membership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual Financial Report 2. Annual Report of the organization 3. Report on Membership 4. Minutes of Prior Meeting 	

Aug. 8, 2020	Chapter Assembly Meeting	YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, CO	Congress, Chapter Relations, General Discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Annual Financial Report2. Annual Report of the organization3. Chapter Membership and Rewards4. Prior Year's Chapter Assembly Minutes	
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Appendix: Documentation

Proposal: Conditions for the AGA to Financially Support Local Tournaments

Committee: Chris Kirschner, Devin Frazee, Dan Ritter

Proposal

That the AGA provide a limited amount of financial support for the development and maintenance of tournaments.

Goals for proposal:

1. Define requirements for any AGA Chapter to request tournament funding support from the AGA.
2. Formalize process for reviewing those requests
3. Specify a budget
4. Specify the basis on how that budget will be distributed
5. Increase attendance at tournaments measure with an increase in games played

Process for Application

1. Application Submitted following Framework
 - a. [Framework](#) for form
 - b. [Requirements](#)
 - c. [Criteria for funding](#)
2. Coordinator Review
 - a. Coordinator to be chosen by AGA president.
 - i. Usually it is the person who developed the program.
 - ii. Devin Frazee is the likely person with Chris Kirschner/Andy Okun as the secondary option should there be a conflict of interest
 - b. Funding is decided by the coordinator
 - c. Budget of \$5,000 per year
 - i. \$2,000 currently earmarked for the New Jersey Open
3. Response
 - a. If approved
 - i. applicant is notified
 - ii. treasurer sends check prior to the event
 - b. If not approved:
 - i. Coordinator gives feedback on why to either cure the issue
 - ii. or notify applicant that the AGA isn't able to fund them

4. Measuring success of program
 - a. Check how well we improved the areas of criteria for funding
 - b. Check % increase of membership in the area
 - c. Further Research enabled by this
 - i. Do prizes offered increase strong player participation?
 - ii. Does having strong players in a tournament attract weaker players?
 - d. Other

Application Framework

Areas of Inquiry

Name of organizer

And contact info

Name of TD

And contact info

Name of Chapter (Collected to ensure that they are a current AGA Chapter, also to know what area the tournament is in)

And contact info of chapter

History of tournament (We do not want to fund startups)

How long has it been done regularly

What is the attendance in the past

Anticipated budget (in specified format)

(We see this as an important indicator of organizational capability.)

Expected revenues

Expected expenses

Expected cost of prizes

Tournament structure

Rounds

Sections

Open, dan, sdk, ssk, 13x13, 9x9

Prizes

Time limits

State championship?

Requirements

1. Active AGA Chapter
2. Previous tournament (maybe small stipend for first tournament)
(Also taking into account change of chapter name/ leadership)

3. Tournament has to have entry fee (encourage community commitment and “buy-in”)
4. Tournament has to be AGA rated

Criteria for calculating the amount of support to be provided

1. Number of participants in prior years
2. Size of local population of AGA members in prior n years
3. Qualifier for other events (eg. state championship)
4. Chapter outreach efforts (measured by chapter rewards system)
5. Additional criteria optional

Proposal for the Creation of a Congress Scholarship Fund

The appendix has been removed from this version of the proposal

Proposal Narrative

The US Go Congress has a complicated and variable financial structure, which has changed substantially since 2007. Since the introduction of clearly articulated stipends for professionals at the Lancaster congress in 2007, supporting our professionals has become a larger and larger portion of our congress costs, while simultaneously most other expenses have also become fixed. **In essence, this means that once the Congress's break-even point is met, the overwhelming percentage of additional revenue is surplus.** *For more information about the Financials of the US Go Congress, please see the appendix below.*

This has led to consistently large surpluses from Congresses, which are out of line with the membership's general feeling that the congress is too expensive. (For some examples of public discussion of the expense of the US Go Congress, see [USGO Congress Costs in 2020 on Life in 19x19](#), [First Time Going to US Go Congress on Reddit](#), and the [comments following David Bogie's August 7 post to Go \(Baduk, Weiqi\) Players on Facebook](#), responding to the referenced L19 discussion.) One way to address this issue is to put more of the funds contributed by those who can pay into subsidies for those who cannot.

This proposal argues for the creation of a Congress Scholarship fund, which would be maintained from the proceeds of the US Go Congress, with or without seed money from the AGA's coffers, or a portion of the Congress surplus that is allocated to the AGA each year. This fund may also be augmented by donations from the membership, as was discussed during the Future Congresses meeting at the 2019 US Go Congress. *For more information about Ideas to Facilitate US Go Congress Attendance by the Average Go Player, for whom price may be an overwhelming concern, see the appendix below.*

The goal would be to create categories of attendee – without recourse to means testing – who would qualify for a congress scholarship due to demographic circumstances such as age and student status. We should also consider (if and only if appropriate staffing can be secured to manage the fund) scholarships for those who have made significant contributions to the go community in the recent past (for example, the calendar year preceding the congress), through activities such as teaching, mentoring, tournament coordination, etc.

The AGF provides substantial support for youth, particularly strong youth, but also youth who have participated in specific tournaments and scholarship competitions. For this reason, the current iteration of this proposal is oriented towards helping adults for whom attendance at the US Go Congress would require a substantial portion of their income. This fund is intended to be

a living thing, however, so its focus could and should change over time, as the needs of the membership change.

Below, I have compiled some of the potential ways that the Scholarship Fund could be funded:

- 50% of the Congress surplus over \$10,000 (if agreed to by the Congress Directors for a given year). *For the specific proposal with regards to funding from the Congress surplus, please see the optional Addendum to the Memorandum of Agreement in the appendix below.* The 2020 USGC Directors have expressed their approval of the proposal.
- Funds donated for the purpose by Congress attendees when they register for the US Go Congress. *For the origin of this proposal, see Ideas to Facilitate US Go Congress Attendance by the Average Go Player in the appendix below.*
- Additional funds from the AGA portion of the Congress surplus.
- Additional funds from the AGA reserves.

Below, I have suggested some potential uses to which these funds can be put, although I think that some of funds should be reserved for new proposals that may appear each year.

- Supporting US Go Congress attendance by young adults age 18-26.
 - This age group is often considered as separate from older adults in Europe, and there is substantial support for considering the specific financial needs of this population, who have all come of age since the Great Recession (and whose lifetime earning potential is therefore greatly hindered – for more on this, see for example this [article from Bankrate](#) – look at the data, not the conclusion that you should use financial products – and [this one from CNBC](#)).
- Supporting US Go Congress attendance by students of all ages (with documentation of current enrollment, current idea card, etc.).
- Supporting teachers (K-12 and Go teachers), particularly if they bring student groups. This may coincide with the soon-to-be-implemented Congress Tour Group Policy that was composed by Chris Kirschner, Andy Okun, and Lisa Scott in 2016, with revisions in 2019. *For the Congress Tour Group Policy, presently still a draft, see the appendix below.*
- Supporting US Go Congress attendance by retired folks, or folks over a certain age (perhaps 70).
- Subsidizing housing costs at expensive venues.
- Subsidizing group ground transportation from designated locations.

Formal Proposal

Proposal

The AGA should create a Scholarship Fund for the US Go Congress, which would allow the AGA to make the event more appealing to folks in certain groups for whom price may be a limiting factor on their attending the US Go Congress.

Funding of Scholarship

The Scholarship Fund should be primarily funded by allocating a portion of the Congress surplus each year. Additional funds can be solicited from AGA members and Congress attendees, who may make a donation under specified conditions and with specified recognition, which may change from time to time.

The AGA may seed the fund with a specified amount of money, most productively a sum in the range of \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Distribution of Scholarship Funds

The Scholarship Funds should be distributed through a public process that primarily designates specific groups as foci for the distributions of funds in a given year. The Scholarship Funds may also be used to recognize the contributions of individual organizers, who may as a result receive public approbation and recognition for their service to go in North America.

Management of Scholarship Distribution

A committee originally comprised of folks holding positions *ex officio* should be created to manage the distribution of the funds in the first two years. This committee should consist of the AGA President, the Congress Coordinator, the Chairperson of the Board, and the Congress Director(s). Following this initial phase, and particularly if the AGA desires to recognize specific individuals, a permanent committee should be set up.