Executive Summary of AGA Board Meeting 8/26/2018

The board approved an investment plan to invest a portion of the AGA's surplus through an outside adviser and discussed the breakdown in the membership manager including the cause and ways to limit the chances of similar problems occurring in the future. The board also began the process of discussing the organization's goals for the next 5 years, which will continue over the next few months. Finally, this meeting marked the transition between board years, with Edward Zhang and Andrew Jackson turning over their seats to Paul Celmer and Chris Saenz.

AGA Board Meeting Minutes 8/26/2018

Present:
Steve Colburn
Andrew Jackson
Chris Kirschner
Samantha Fede (AGA Secretary)
Martin Lebl (chair)
Paul Celmer
Gurujeet Khalsa
Lisa Scott
Andy Okun (AGA President)
Edward Zhang

Absent:
Chris Saenz

Minutes:
Meeting called to order at 8:06pm EST.

Lisa moves to approve minutes, Steve seconds. Unanimous. Minutes approved.

President's Report:
Do we as an organization want to help local chapters get venues [for tournaments]? I think no… We've generally relied on chapters to do this, and if they have an expectation we pay, I don't know what would happen. I bring this up because a major non-congress tournament isn't going to happen for the second year in a row because of issues securing a venue. Your thoughts?

Martin: Yeah, I think sometimes small clubs have less weight than the AGA for securing a venue.

Chris: If we can render non-monetary aid [like insurance] I think we should.

Lisa: I don't think that we should do it as a policy, because we don't have the manpower to provide that service to everyone.

Andy Okun: I'd like to commend Jeff Shaevel for having a qualifier for the Tianyuan cup, and we had our own pros participating, and they knocked out the 9ps participating. Eric Lui won, which makes me very happy.

I'm just back from the Chinese Go Congress, which is modeled on ours/european [focusing on the masses enjoying, rather than pros.] This was their second, and it had 10,000 people in attendance. They had a lot of youth events, and a computer go (between AI) event. I will continue to be in the US for a while now.

Edward: The final games were between two chinese AIs.

Andy: The facebook Go AI was their as well, and the Google one wasn't because the technology has moved on to apply to medicine.

Investment Policy

Andy: We haven't voted on this yet. Does anyone need a reminder or should we call for a vote?

Andrew: Is this something that we should wait for new board members to vote on?

Andy: No, we've been discussing it for several weeks.

Andrew: Okay, I'm happy to vote on it, and I'm prepared.

Andy: Here's the statement-- take half the money in the bank and invest it in an endowment style arrangement, and either a) invest it ourselves, b) invest it through an outside advisor, and c) invest it through an outside advisor that I can get us a discount with. I strongly believe we should go with an outside advisor so that we have a stronger legal and professional position.

Martin: I would support option c.

Chris: Do we need an executive session?

Andy: No, unless you all disagree.

Chris: Do you need to do a formal disclosure of conflict-of-interest?

Andy: Sure, I am very open to that. I believe I've fully disclosed, but happy to make an official statement.

Chris: I motion that we invest through the outside advisor referred by Andy Okun, and that Andy Okun provide a document of record declaring the conflict of interest.

Andrew: I motion that we accept this investment plan without such a disclosure necessary.

Steve: I second Chris's motion, just to cover our bases.

Edward: For clarification, will the investment advisor report to Andy Okun directly?

Steve: There's a place on our website for these sorts of things.

Andy: The treasurer presumably also.

Votes on the motion; the motion passes unanimously.

[Post hoc: Link to COI statement]

Other things: I agree you should discuss multiyear priorities, with the new board.

Regarding the membership manager, I think we're working on a fix, but if it doesn't get fixed soon we should send another story out in the EJ. This raises an issue of should we continue with our existing membership management software or should we transition to something professionally supported? If the board would like to look more concretely into it, please advise me and I can do that.

Martin: I think generally that's a good discussion, but not necessary to come to a decision today. But I think we do need to notify the individuals again so people aren't trying again and again and being confused.

Andrew: I'd like to suggest that someone on the board who is informed on this give us his opinion. Steve?

Steve: I'd like to remind the board that this breakdown is caused… well, Charles does a lot more/different work than Sam Zimmerman used to do by himself and with his wife, and more of us can have access to the system and have additional admins helping with the workload. The board did try to use a commercial option in 2007, and after about $13,000 we just decided it couldn't work. It's an important issue but let's take a step back. The volunteer who had to get taken off the membership management project was Nate Eagle, who was very busy doing Congress Organization.

Martin: Well, I think the technology has changed since 2007. And when it breaks down like it has, we only have part time volunteers. So a commercial system wouldn't be vulnerable to these long-term outages.

Steve: This isn't unique to just the software support. There are many positions that if we lost people, things would break down.

Martin: We need more back-ups for our systems.

Steve: We don't have a lot of volunteers for this type of coding problems in THP [?correct?]. If it was python, I think it'd be different.

Andrew: Partially true. There are a lot of people who think they want to volunteer their code, but there are a lot fewer who are actually do volunteer their code. I think even if we throw money at this, commercial solutions still may not be straightforward or solve our problems.

Edward: I don't believe there's a quick fix. We need more IT volunteers in the future. I think this is more of an execution issue rather than a board issue.

Andrew: Sure. I just want to emphasize that even if we try to buy a software solution it may not be as successful.

Andy: I think it's reasonable for the board to discuss this. In terms of other software, the frustration I've had over the years is that it's hard for our management system to evolve when we don't have access to the original author of the code and so things don't get done to improve the web elements of things.

Steve: I've been managing the web stuff for 10 years, but I rarely hear these complaints. I've handled almost everything that I've been told, but these people are maybe not contacting the appropriate person.

Chris: In my previous review of commercial solutions for Go Congress, I found it wasn't worth it. We'd get roughly what we currently have, for more money and maybe slightly better reporting.

Martin: The thing we would get is that when something breaks, there would be a dedicated team to fix it.

Chris: I'm not sure we can actually count on that. I think we need a few months to research this and do a thorough job. I think we need a better understanding of what caused this problem for the future.

Steve: The issue is that the system supporting our code is outdated and we haven't put forward the resources to keep this up to date. Over the summer, paypal stopped supporting it. So both systems still work, but they don't communicate. It's the security system underlying things.

Andy: Maybe we should move on for now rather than talking more about it at this meeting?

Edward: Maybe we can ask parents of children who play to volunteer more since they are around at AGA events?

Steve: We have dozens of go playing coders who have the skills but they are too busy and too expensive to commit too much time to these projects.

Andy: Parents as volunteers is a good idea.

[cross-talk]

Martin: Do you have any estimates of how long until it's fixed, Steve?

Steve: I've configured the new server, but there's a PHP problem I can't fix with the membership software specifically and I'm checking in with Justin regularly. I think Nate Eagle deserves a break.

[cross-talk]

Martin: Do we have a volunteer to write up the steps that members need to take to manually get membership set up?

Steve: I'll send an email to Chris Garlock and Charles about that.

Chris: We should also send it to Chapters.

"""End of president's report"""

Discuss potential organizational goals for the 1, 3, and 5 year time frame, which could be developed into policy goals:

Steve: I think we should double our volunteers.

Andrew: And while we're at it, double our membership.

Edward: What is our current membership?

Steve: You can find this by logging into membership manager. About 2000 members, 100 chapters.

Martin: We're pretty stagnant.

[cross-talk]

Andy: Do you want me as AGA president to propose priorities or do you want to think about it and ask my opinion?

Matin: If you have ideas, we'd welcome hearing them.

Andy: I don't want to prevent board members from sharing their own ideas or dominate the conversation on priorities.

Steve: Sounds like we want to increase membership and reduce drop out. It's been a long time since we've polled our membership on anything.

Andy: Two years ago we did a post-congress survey.

Lisa: Yeah, it hasn't adapted much. It was done through SurveyMonkey. It wasn't done in a way that was useful for general purposes.

Andy: It's also a good way to interact with members in a way that makes them feel listened to.

Lisa: But if the comments aren't taken to someone who can do something, it's not relevant.

Steve: Then we need a goal to apply this information towards. Like, find out what people don't like about this organization.

Edward: I've heard that local tournaments don't have people who are at the same rank, or there are only once a week tournaments. Chess tournaments happen multiple per weekend.

Lisa: When we had more tournaments, we had more members. But it was because Hikaru no Go just came out.

Andy: In terms of the conversation about goals, how is this going to be organized?

Lisa: I'd like to have a general conversation about priorities so we can see if we're on the same page before setting arbitrary goals. I'd also like to figure out what's currently in the works so we can focus and allocate resources appropriately.

Edward: What kind of function will the AGA have in the future? Like for example, some organizations focus on pros, teaching etc.

Martin: Should these be aspirational goals or specific goals?

Lisa: I think we should figure out what we can do, and then establish where we that will get us.

Steve: I think this will take months. Right now we should just discuss ideas and then bring them together from our minutes and notes at some point.

Edward: I think we should figure out what we can provide for the $30/year.

Lisa: Okay, like what?

Edward: Well, teaching.

Steve: No. What can people actually get just from membership? Not tuition.

Edward: Well more events!

Gurujeet: We're looking at how we can do more outreach to festivals? I think we need to have more outreach at a local level, as a goal.

Andy: I have an idea from sports marketing-- the model he said was you try to gather together the people involved in your sport, and once you have them together it's workable and marketable. I think we should try to expand on our broadcasting because a lot of new members are generated from that.

Steve: Our youtube channel is above 11k followers.

Martin: Maybe something like, "This broadcast is brought to you by AGA members."

Lisa: The industry of putting things online is changing a lot such that people can't make money just from views.

[cross-talk]

Lisa: I have two additional things- 1) overhaul of the rating systems, and 2) professionalism, including hiring someone to do menial administrative tasks and marketing.

Chris: I agree about the ratings. The current issues have the potential to get out of control. I think this is a reasonable goal for the coming year. There are people interested in working on this. Andrew being one of them.

Gurujeet: We should focus on outreach in terms of non-tournament activities.

Edward: We should talk about staffing, like do we want to have paid positions, or more volunteers?

Martin: With bigger membership, maybe we could afford paid staff.

Steve: In the past, when Sam Zimmerman was doing membership, his wife and Roy Laird were paid for data entry and picking things up from a P.O. Box.

Edward: I've been involved in schools that the management is volunteer but the teachers are paid.

Lisa: Yes, but the amounts people pay to participate in those classes are very different. These aren't easily comparable.

Martin: Do we have an understanding of the demographics? A large fraction of our membership is involved in our Congress. But all those people aren't willing to sink money into their hobby.

Lisa: Before we make comments about trends, lets do a survey. But we should think about how we can provide services to our members, rather than just getting members. Rather than talking about willingness, maybe we can talk about whether people feel ABLE to spend the money.

[cross-talk]

Paul Celmer: A directed contact with people who have dropped out might be very helpful.

LIsa: Even if we only get 10% response

.Edward: What are your ambitions, Andy?

Andy: I'd like our pros to be more involved in international competition and win things, I'd like more go in schools, and I'd like to expand our broadcasting.

New business

This is Edward and Andrew's last meeting as Board Members.

Andrew: I look forward to serving as EVP and attending future meetings.

Edward: I'd like to express my gratitude and I've enjoyed working with everyone.

Martin: Thank you for your service. [Everyone expressed thanks to outgoing board members.]

Set time for future meetings in the fall

September 23rd, October 21st, 2018

Adjourn
Steve motions to adjourn, Lisa seconds. Unanimous. Adjourned at 9:48pm EST