

MINUTES OF THE AGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sunday, 9 July 2006, 7 PM EDT

Attending board members: Bob Barber, Mike Bull, Paul Celmer, Willard Haynes, Roy Laird, Jeff Shaevel

President: Michael Lash

Not attending: Yuan Zhou

Chairman Roy Laird called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM EDT

Roy welcomed Paul Celmer to the Board, replacing Allan Abramson, who resigned in April.

The minutes of the June meeting were accepted without amendment.

Roy noted that the Board had still not elected a president for the next two year term. Willard nominated Michael Lash, Bob seconded, and Lash was unanimously elected as president for the next two years.

President's report

AGA Archivist

President Lash reported that he had discussed the position further with David Doshay of California, and he was very comfortable with this nominee. He has drafted a letter of agreement he proposes to ask Mr. Doshay to sign. Mike Bull reported that he had been unable to contact Mr. Doshay as planned. He stated that he shared concerns Roy had mentioned in e-mail, regarding whether the archivist should "develop" policy regarding retention and storage of archives independently, or with the advice/consent of the Board. Bob asked, was Craig the first archivist? And how much autonomy has he had? Roy responded that Craig has been amassing and maintaining the archive for more than twenty years, and as far as he (Roy) knows, Craig was the first archivist. There has been no formal oversight of his activities. Michael Lash stated he could easily amend the letter to include a consultative role for the Board in developing archive policy.

The Board unanimously approved the appointment of Mr. Doshay as archivist, subject to the terms and conditions stipulated in President Lash's letter of agreement as amended.

Chapter Membership Drive

The Board unanimously approved \$7500 to fund a chapter-based membership drive. Details will be released at the US Go Congress next month.

Congress Surplus Policy

President Lash has not been able to develop a proposal on this issue, so the Board agreed to table it for the next meeting.

Ing Funds

President Lash spoke to Executive VP Chris Kirschner a few days ago, after Chris had the opportunity at the most recent international rules meeting to interact at length with Mr. Yu-chia Yang, the Secretary of the Ing Foundation, regarding the Foundation's current policy of funding North American projects. Mr. Yang confirmed that under the new procedure, the Foundation Board will review and approve projects in advance, rather than simply providing funds on a regular basis, as the Foundation does for Europe. However, Chris was unable to secure further clarification regarding guidelines, expectations, or the Ing Board's inclinations. Chris will set up a conference call within the next two weeks, to include Mr. Yang, President Lash, Board Chairman Laird, and the Foundation's lawyer, Mr. Chen. It was also reiterated that proposals should be submitted through American Ing Goe; however, Chris submitted four proposals (to continue the Ing Cup, the Masters, the Redmond Cup, and Congress subsidies) to Mr. Yang directly. Mr. Yang accepted the proposals.

Willard stated that a clear, definite answer is required. Roy restated the Board's previously taken decision, that the aforementioned four Ing-funded projects will continue through this year's Congress. Their future will depend on whether we are able to gain funding for them through the new procedure.

Chinese Pro Tour

The China Weiqi Association has responded to President Lash's suggestion, at a meeting last year, that Chinese pros teach American players, by offering a six-month tour of the US by two Chinese-speaking pros. Details to be discussed include the length of the tour; accommodations; responsibility for costs such as professional fees, meals and travel costs within the US. Willard thought it might be difficult to fill a six-month itinerary. Mike Bull suggested that an effort be made to send them to places pros have not visited before. Paul suggested that Chinese cultural schools around the country might be interested in co-sponsoring pro visits to their communities. Roy expressed concern regarding how a pro tour might be perceived by "American" pros, those who live here and try to earn a living through their profession, and what the impact on their careers might be.

The Board agreed that we should continue to explore the idea by developing a more detailed proposal that is acceptable to the China Weiqi Association and does not place an undue financial burden on the AGA. The Board approved of President Lash sending a response to the China Weiqi Association declining the offer to have pros tour after this Congress, and to explore the possibility of doing so one year from now.

President Lash concluded his report at this point.

Access to Corporate Records

Willard reported that, as agreed at the last meeting, he had done some research regarding the level of financial disclosure provided to the public to organizations similar to the AGA. As a member of the US Chess Federation, he explored their procedures in some detail. He found that their financial report provides a similar level of detail, but is more extensive because they have more extensive activities, such as ownership of real estate and operation of an online store. The Executive Board meets three times per

year (more if needed), usually in person, and the entire proceedings are recorded. Copies of the recordings are available to members. To gain further understanding of this issue, he recommended that we look into 501c4 corporations such as the AGA.

President Lash stated that he and Treasurer Ulo Tamm have been struggling with this year's financial report. It is a difficult document for amateurs to produce. He has suggested that the Treasurer invest up to \$1000/year in the services of a financial professional who would organize and audit our books. The Board is in favor of this plan.

The Board also considered how to respond to complaints of financial malfeasance and requests for specific information. They agreed that ultimately, there is a right and responsibility to limit such disclosure. Whether from malice or misunderstanding, facts can be misinterpreted, and organizations cannot be endlessly held to account by people or entities that refuse or are unable to understand the facts.

Roy suggested that any person or entity with concerns about AGA activities should be required to submit a written request for specific information. Lash responded that this resembled a Freedom of Information Act procedure, but as a private corporation the AGA is not bound by the FOIA. [but as a 501(c) corporation we may have special obligations to disclose information.]

The Board agreed that a better organized financial report would help interested parties to resolve concerns about AGA activities. Bob reminded the Board that this discussion arose from our concern to understand our obligations – what are we required to disclose, and to whom? The Board authorized President Lash to discuss this question with the AGA's attorney and report back.

Tournament Guide

President Lash reported an exchange with Ken Koester, raising the issue of the AGA possibly purchasing the rights to the tournament guide to which he claims copyright. Ken appears to be considering this idea. Further discussion next meeting.

Wilcox Proposal

Roy noted that he had distributed to the Board a message from Bruce Wilcox, proposing to sell the AGA for \$10,000 limited distribution rights to two programs – “Igo Dojo”, an instructional module based on Wilcox theories regarding “Sector Fights” and “Contact Fights”; and EGO, a program that plays go. The AGA would acquire permanent rights to distribute copies of these programs to all AGA members. Wilcox argues that his product will help new players to climb the initial learning curve, with the result that more of them keep playing (and supporting the AGA).

No Board member voiced strong support for this proposal. Some had not reviewed it in detail. Paul expressed that the terminology in Wilcox's books is unique, and does not jibe with terminology the reader will encounter later in other books. It was noted that the intended audience for these products may be limited, making the investment questionable in terms of return of value. Jeff suggested that, if we decide to make such an investment, there are many products to consider; we should not select one simply because an offer is made. Willard asked and Roy confirmed that the product is Windows only.

Priorities

Roy noted that the Board had recently identified a number of priorities, and led a brief discussion of them:

Pro Issues: Willard stated there are two parts to this issue: the selection of US representatives for international competition, and the possible creation of an American professional association. Paul had heard that such an association already exists, and wondered whether we could work with them. Roy reviewed recent developments, in which the AGA declared the need for “fair, inclusive, transparent” selection mechanisms for such slots. This assertion aroused an angry response from a small group of professional players in Korea who claim to represent the interests of American professionals, and who continue to influence the selection of “American” players in certain international tournaments.

Mike Bull asked what makes this group, the American Professional Go Association (APGA), illegitimate. Roy replied that each country has one national organization, representing the interests of all players. The AGA is credentialed as that organization in the United States by its membership in the International Go Federation. He stated that APGA officials respond to this point by claiming that the IGF is an amateur-only organization. However, in reality, there is no worldwide association of professional organizations. When questions need to be addressed regarding international tournaments, including those featuring professional players, they are resolved either through the auspices of the IGF, or through relationships among international go officials that the IGF has brought into being. In addition, Roy said that the APGA almost always selects a player who resides in Asia, rather than a true “American” pro residing and working in the US, an unprecedented usurpation of the rights of players with professional credentials who are living and working in the US.

Roy commented that this situation raises the question of whether the AGA can serve the interests of true American professionals by creating a special division within the AGA, as pros are credentialed by associations in Japan, China and Korea. He stated that he, President Lash and executive VP Kirschner are looking at a preliminary draft of a document that could create such an entity. The next step is to review it with the credential-holding American go community. If such an organization can serve the interests of these players, while also creating a route by which American players can achieve professional status, we should do it.

Bob asked whether pros and strong players had been consulted. Roy responded that he had spoken to many of the principals involved. There are inherent conflicts. Strong players want to earn pro status; current pros prefer to remain more exclusive. They comment that in Asia, people who achieve pro status have also gone through a rigorous instruction program. They are not merely talented; they are highly schooled in their art.

Tournament Software: Paul identified this as a critical need, citing difficulties this year’s US Open TD, Duane Burns, has had getting reliable software. The authors of the software that was used last year have apparently abandoned their efforts. TDWin, the software Duane will use, is useless without the personal help of the programmer. President Lash reported that Christopher Sira, our new Tournament Coordinator, is well into the rewriting of TDWin for all platforms.

Roy commented that one of the problems in the search for good software is output compatibility with the AGA ratings system. Mike Bull stated that Bay area programmer Reid Augustin has an excellent program that can interface with the ratings, but acknowledged one drawback: it does not offer the option of Swiss-McMahon pairings, as TDWin does.

Roy mentioned that a program, GoDraw, has been in use in Europe for many years. If it is suitable for our purposes, the author is willing to permit unrestricted use of it. We would need a way to convert GoDraw output to AGA ratings data input.

Membership Drive: President Lash's chapter-based initiative addresses this issue.

National Tournament Schedule: President Lash reported that Christopher Sira is well on the way to creating an ongoing annual tournament schedule.

Web Page Upgrade: Roy reported that the website recently switched from Windows to Linux, a major upgrade that will pay off with increased functionality. President Lash wondered whether the upgrade will include a redesign of the graphic elements, a "face lift." Roy said that the current focus is restabilizing the site on the new platform and taking advantage of the added functionality through various site enhancements.

Youth Tournaments: President Lash reported that he is working on a proposal for a national youth tournament to select the North American junior and senior players for The World Youth Go Championship.

New Business

Bob reported that Jeff will produce an award for Mr. Nakayama this year, and they are finalizing the wording. They will circulate that draft. Roy questioned whether this was a Board-level decision, but everyone appreciate the courtesy of being included.

Discussing the date of the next meeting, the Board decided not to meet again until the US Go Congress, on either Tuesday or Thursday at 3:30 PM, so as not to conflict with the AGF Board meeting. President Lash will coordinate this schedule.

On behalf of the Board, Roy expressed thanks to Jeff Shaevel and Mike Bull, whose terms will expire before the next meeting, and to Yuan Zhou in absentia, for their valued service on the Board.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

-- submitted by Roy Laird

