

Minutes
AGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Wednesday, July 6, 2011 – 8:00 PM EDT

Meeting called to order by: Andrew Okun at 8:07 PM EDT
Type of meeting: Regular Monthly Conference Call

Attendees:

Jie Li (At Large)
Paul Celmer (Eastern Region)
Lisa Scott (Central Region)
Laura Kolb (Central Region)
Andrew Okun (Western Region, Chairman)
Gordon Castanza (Western Region)
Allan Abramson (President)
Pauline Pohl (Secretary)

Absent:

Chuck Robbins (Eastern Region)

1. Approval of May 22, 2011 minutes

Gordon Castanza made a motion to approve the minutes of the last regular monthly Board meeting from May 22, 2011. Jie Li seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Call for additional agenda items and new business

- a. Andy Okun asked to discuss formation of a committee to select an Executive Vice President
- b. Lisa Scott asked to talk about paying someone to attract new members and do fundraising.

3. President's Report

a. Discussion item: Database Demonstration

- i. Allan Abramson asked the Board members to make suggestions if they want any changes made to the new database.

- ii. Scott asked when it could be up and running and asked if it could be working in time to help with Congress registration. Abramson said he will try.

b. Discussion item: Recognition for retiring volunteers

- i. Abramson suggested some options for recognizing Sam and Karen Zimmerman's contributions. One is to pay their expenses to the Congress next year. The second is to offer airfare to the European Go Congress. Third is dinner at a fancy Philadelphia restaurant, and fourth is go equipment from an artisan wood shop in North Carolina.
- ii. For Adam Bridges, Abramson suggested a plaque along with a savings bond, an AGA membership extension, or a laptop computer loaded with all of the go software.
- iii. Okun said he would choose the comps to the US Go Congress or a go board and bowls for Sam and Karen Zimmerman.
- iv. Scott said that she would like to send Sam and Karen to the US Go Congress and an extension of Adam's AGA membership for five years, the same number he served as Treasurer, would be appropriate for him.
- v. Jie Li said he thinks a tangible item like a go board would be more meaningful than a membership extension.
- vi. Celmer said he thinks Adam would appreciate a go board made from someone in North Carolina. Okun asked how much a custom made go board would cost and Celmer said he would have to ask the artist. Okun said he would like to do it but it would depend on the cost.
- vii. There was a consensus that it would be nice to send Karen and Sam to the Congress, but Okun said Chuck Robbins would have to find out if they would want that or not. If they are not interested in such a trip, a go board would be nice.
- viii. The consensus was that as long as the go board is affordable and available, that will be the gift for Adam.

If that falls through, we will offer a membership extension of five years.

c. Action item: FY2012 Budget

- i. Abramson said he sent out his latest budget and hopes to get a vote of approval this evening.
- ii. Okun asked if the prior year actual numbers are updated. Abramson said they are actual end of fiscal year numbers.
- iii. Okun said it looks like we are budgeting slightly under where we ended up this year.
- iv. Abramson said the open question was whether or not to add \$1000 to the Redmond Cup budget.
- v. Castanza said he is still having trouble accepting the casual labor PO Box and telephone line item 60102.
- vi. Castanza said we are paying \$20 per hour for the work which may be high considering the job is mainly to ride a subway to pick up mail at a post office.
- vii. Abramson said the rate was set by the president and the Board several years ago and hasn't been questioned until now.
- viii. Castanza said he would suggest offering the New York state minimum wage for the hours. He also noted that when he recently visited New York City, he saw discounts available. For example, if you buy a \$10 ticket you get a bonus of \$1.40. He wonders if available discounts are reflected in the rate we are paying for tokens.
- ix. Abramson said the actual amount spent on tokens (60100) last year was \$112 which he thinks is reasonable.
- x. Abramson added that there is more to the job than simply sitting on the subway. There is also answering phone calls and letters which is higher level work than a minimum wage job.
- xi. The total charges are reasonable for the amount of work done in Abramson's opinion. The budgeted amount has been cut approximately in half over the past few years. It used to be about \$8000 per year and now it is about \$4000 per year.

- xii.** Okun said that \$20 per hour was reasonable for office work in New York, but in this age of virtual offices we should be able to organize ourselves so that we don't have to pay someone that much to ride a subway to the post office.
- xiii.** Scott said that a physical address is necessary for many reasons and a post office box is not good for bank accounts and other official purposes.
- xiv.** Abramson said he has heard of a service where they go to a post office box, scan the contents and transmit it securely anywhere for a price of about \$1000 per year.
- xv.** Okun said if Chelsea Station was no longer there and we had to start from scratch what would we do? Abramson said we need an address in New York, and he would want an address not connected to any individual volunteer which would change over time.
- xvi.** Scott said we could forward mail from the post office. Abramson said the limit on that is a year.
- xvii.** Okun said we could use a different service that could provide both an address and the forwarding service. We could leave the Post office box as our official address, but change the website contact information to the new, lower cost option.
- xviii.** Jie Li said he has done extensive research on virtual offices, and it can be done quickly. They are getting advanced so mail can be forwarded as often as we want with only postage as the expense. It costs about \$100 per month for the address. Jie Li thinks it is the best next step. Scott agreed. Okun said yes, but not tonight.
- xix.** Jie Li said there are companies that help with the transition. Abramson said he will look into the virtual office. Jie Li said he would forward some options to the Board and the president.
- xx.** Abramson said there is also the question of answering the phone. Jie Li said the \$100 also includes a phone number that can be forwarded as well. He will forward the information to Abramson.

- xxi.** Scott said she would like to have research done on this issue between now and the Congress so a decision might be made then.
- xxii.** Okun asked if there were any other line items that need to be discussed. Castanza said he is not done with that like item, because the spending keeps going up.
- xxiii.** Abramson said we started the year saying we were going to reduce costs by automating the credit card processing, but since we had webmaster problems, that transition was delayed and the costs stayed high.
- xxiv.** Scott said it is unacceptable to go over a budget by so much without any notification. Abramson said focusing on one line item when we had others that were below budget is unfair.
- xxv.** Okun said the budget is a goal and we try to meet the budget, but it is only a guess and we need to be somewhat flexible.
- xxvi.** Jie Li suggested reducing the hourly rate until we get the virtual office to keep the costs down. Tournament prizes and other expenses have been cut, so why should this be different? Abramson said he predicts Mary would quit if that decision was made. Okun said if that is the expected outcome, a reduction in rate would be counterproductive in the short term.
- xxvii.** Scott said the sooner we move to a virtual office the lower those expenses will be. There was general agreement.
- xxviii.** Celmer made a motion to approve the budget.
- xxix.** Kolb seconded the motion.
- xxx.** Okun asked if there was any further discussion
- xxxi.** Celmer said he thinks Allan did a good job of working to drive down costs and he anticipates more improvement in the future.
- xxxii.** There was a vote of 4 in favor (Okun, Celmer, Scott, Kolb), 1 opposed (Castanza), and 1 abstention (Jie Li). The motion passed and the budget was approved.

4. Discussion of Castanza's proposal

- a. Castanza had circulated a proposal for amendments to the by-laws. Castanza said he thinks the president is out of control, and that the Board needs to have more control over the president.
- b. Castanza said we need to hold the president accountable for his actions and performance.
- c. Castanza said his proposals also spell out the expectations of conduct the Board members will adhere to during meetings, provide for mechanisms for budget revisions and transfers, and provide clearer delineation of the job descriptions for both the president and for the treasurer.
- d. There needs to be accountability and specific job descriptions and periodic performance appraisals for all volunteer positions.
- e. Okun asked who controls our bylaws? It looks like the Assembly votes on the bylaws, so if we want to consider changes, we need to do so at the Congress.
- f. Okun said there's a lot in the text Castanza wrote that is too detailed to be added to an official document. Less detail is generally better, because conditions can change and you don't want to have to change the document each time.
- g. Okun said job descriptions of volunteer positions are a good idea but they don't have to be a part of the bylaws.
- h. Scott said she agrees with all that Okun said about Castanza's proposal.
- i. Celmer said he likes the idea of cataloging the rulings of the Board, but changing the bylaws should be discussed at the Congress.
- j. Jie Li said we should implement the easy ones first and the hard ones later.
- k. Okun said since amending the bylaws is not a Board prerogative, what would Castanza like to do about it?
- l. Castanza said he wouldn't mind discussing it at the Assembly, but it may be hard for the members to read it all in time to make a decision.

- m. Abramson said the possibility of raising the life membership rates has been brought up several years in a row and the members were always against it.
- n. Castanza said that rather than submitting the proposals to the Assembly for approval, the Board could just adopt them by resolution to use as an operating principle of the Board.
- o. Okun said he needs more time to think about what parts he is in favor of and which he is opposed to before acting.
- p. Scott said she would like to make changes to our policy which would probably be less formal than a resolution.
- q. Castanza said he would like to have action before too much longer. Okun agreed to discuss it at the next Board meeting.

5. Discussion of SAMG question

- a. Abramson said Thomas Hsiang has asked that the requirement to reside in the US for six months of the year be waived to allow Michael Redmond to compete for the US in the Sport Accord Mind Games. This was done for the first Mind Games, and there were protests from Koreans that Abramson would like to avoid happening again. He thinks if there is a policy it should be applied the same way to all people.
- b. Okun asked if when the waiver was done last time it would be automatic the next time. Abramson said it is not, because we didn't even know if there would be another time.
- c. Celmer said he defers to Abramson's judgment on this even though he respects Thomas Hsiang and Michael Redmond it seems like making an exception would cause more problems.
- d. Scott said it's too political of an issue for her to have an opinion on it.
- e. Okun said he is not inclined to take action to overturn the policy.
- f. Jie Li suggested we recognize Michael Redmond by naming him the coach for the US team instead.
- g. Okun suggested recognizing Redmond at this year's Go Congress in some way to thank him for all of his

contributions. He suggested sharing ideas by e-mail to come up with some ideas.

6. New Business

a. Executive Vice President Position

- i. Okun said the position of EVP is described in the bylaws and the position is vacant.
- ii. Abramson said Chris Kirschner was in that position for a time, but it is currently vacant.
- iii. Okun asked if the position would normally be a training position for the president's job and the person would normally be the next president.
- iv. Abramson said it can happen that way and it would be logical.
- v. Okun suggested forming a committee to select an Executive Vice President. Scott agreed that is a good idea.
- vi. Abramson said Okun and the Board should select the committee to choose the next EVP. Okun suggested having Board members on the committee and asked for volunteers.
- vii. Scott, Celmer, and Jie Li volunteered to be on the committee. Okun suggested asking Chuck Robbins to serve since he knows so many AGA members.
- viii. Okun said the volunteers will work to fill the position of EVP.

b. Fundraising and Membership Proposal

- i. Scott said she would like to discuss a proposal to offer a fundraiser a percentage of money raised by recruiting new members.
- ii. Okun suggested consulting Peter Freedman, because he has experience in the area.
- iii. Scott asked if we can take some action at the next meeting and Okun said yes.

7. Establish time and date of next meeting

The next monthly Board meeting will be at the Go Congress on August 4, 2011 at 1:30 pm PDT.

8. Adjourn

Castanza made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Scott seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM EDT.

Minutes submitted by Pauline Pohl, AGA Secretary