



## December Special Board Meeting

USA Fencing (United States Fencing Association, Inc.)

2024-12-14 10:00 - 12:00 MST

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Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88318762990?pwd=Gr8F1mhwPcvYO48ZEeyCbUrfNBZVRU.1>

Passcode: 743125

#### II. Call to Order

Roll Call   General Announcements   Opening Remarks - Chair   Moment of  
Remembrance   Peter Westbrook   Conflict of Interest Declaration

#### III. CEO, Operations & Financial Update

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**C. 2024-2026 USA Fencing Board Charter and Governance/Operational Guardrails.....55**

Motion: To approve the 2024-2026 USA Fencing Board Charter and Governance/Operational Guardrails. Rationale: As part of the 2024 USA Fencing Board Retreat and ensuing culture meetings, the Board has drafted a new Charter in order to establish standards of professionalism and agreement as to where the Board will focus. The charter may be amended by a simple motion, and should be re-evaluated in 2026.

USA Fencing Board Charter Sessions\_v0.5\_2024-10-11.pdf.....55

**D. US SEMI Committee**

To appoint Felicia Zimmerman to the US SEMI Committee as an ex-officio member as a result of her role with the FIE SEMI.

**VI. New Business**

**A. Independent Director Appointment - Marie Donoghue.....66**

MOTION: Per the recommendation of the Nominating Committee (see attached report), to appoint Marie Donoghue as an Independent Director of USA Fencing for a term to end Fall 2026. A resume for Ms. Donoghue is attached. Rationale: The Bylaws of USA Fencing call for three (3) Independent Directors to be seated as voting members of the board and there are currently two vacancies temporarily held by Amanda Nguyen and Darryl Jacobs. The vacancies have two different end dates (2025 and 2026). After extensive interviews of 14 candidates, Marie Donoghue was the most qualified nominee in the opinion of the Nominating Committee. Her legal credentials and expertise across the sports industry will greatly benefit USA Fencing. As the most qualified nominee, the Nominating Committee recommends that she fills the vacant term with a later end date.

Nominating Committee Report.pdf.....66

**B. Independent Director Appointment - Jade Burroughs.....69**

MOTION: Per the recommendation of the Nominating Committee (see previously attached report), to appoint Jade Burroughs as an Independent Director of USA Fencing for a term to end Fall 2025. A resume for Ms. Burroughs is attached. Rationale: The Bylaws of USA Fencing call for three (3) Independent Directors to be seated as voting members of the board and there are currently two vacancies temporarily held by Amanda Nguyen and Darryl Jacobs. The vacancies have two different end dates (2025 and 2026). After extensive interviews of 14 candidates, Jade Burroughs was the second-most qualified nominee in the opinion of the Nominating Committee. Her vast experience in sports (including NCAA) and collaboration with a variety of stakeholders in high pressure situations will greatly benefit USA Fencing.

JadeBurroughs 2024.pdf.....69

**C. Governance Task Force**

Motion: To form a new Governance Task Force with the scope of evaluating the following areas: Board composition and roles Role of Leadership Academy in identifying future Board leaders Nominations and Petitions Process Eligibility to Serve as Chair The composition of the task force will be as follows: Chair- Damien Lehfeltd At Larges- Maria Panyi, Molly Hill Independents- To be amended pending appointment of nominees in December meeting Athlete Reps- TBD A report will be produced in the May 2025 meeting to include recommendations on bylaw changes, rationale, and value proposition to membership. Rationale: As USA Fencing becomes a \$16M organization with 44,000 members, it is timely to evaluate the recommendations

created by the Governance Task Force (GTF) four years ago and evolve the organization's governance structure to support the rapid growth of the organization. Strategic Plan Alignment: Evaluating and potentially amending Board structure may better position the organization to holistically deliver upon strategic plan objectives. Stakeholders Impacted: Board, USA Fencing General Membership Change Impact Evaluation: The formation of the task force may be considered to have a low impact. However, recommendations made by the task force may ultimately result in high impact/high risk changes to multiple stakeholder groups. A change impact evaluation will be conducted upon the delivery of the report with recommendations for change management with the community.

#### **D. Event Site Selection Inclusion Policy.....71**

**Motion** - To amend the USA Fencing Site Selection Inclusion Policy to allow more flexibility at the city level for those willing to offer protections to women and LGBTQIA+ members. **Background** - In October 2022, USA Fencing committed to protecting its' LGBTQIA+ individuals and show support for its' women members by giving preference to selecting venues within states that had more inclusive laws. Original: <https://www.usafencing.org/news/2022/november/03/usa-fencing-to-give-preference-to-states-with-more-inclusive-laws-when-selecting-future-host-cities-for-national-tournaments> **Policy** USA Fencing includes a wide variety of factors in its' site selection process for national events including but limited to: Square footage requirements. City interest and availability in hosting. Costs to USA Fencing and USA Fencing families. **Accessibility.** Geographic diversity across national tournaments. USA Fencing will give preference to sites within states that have High, Medium and Fair tallies awarded by LGBTMAP.org and avoid where possible states that have a Negative Overall Policy Tally, or "red". USA Fencing will also give preference to sites within states that do not have laws that endanger the health of members, and will avoid those with laws that may see a medical professional prosecuted for assisting a member in need of critical medical care, or reproductive-related medical care. **Exception** USA Fencing will provide an exception to sites that might otherwise be excluded by this policy where city officials provide a written undertaking and plan of action assuring the protection, welfare and support of LGBTQIA+ members of the USA Fencing community, protection of the rights of Women, the rights of any other affected member group while attending such an event, and the protection of medical professionals coming to the aid of any individual needing medical attention and/or reproductive-related care. In considering such an exception, USA Fencing must account for the overall actions of a city in relation to its own LGBTQIA+ and female residents, to the best of its ability and, working in tandem with the city, provide support resources to affected members of the USA Fencing community. **Rationale:** This updated policy serves to take our commitment to inclusion to the city level (as opposed to the State level), allowing USA Fencing a more granular opportunities to work with cities who are in turn willing to offer the same protections that are available in states with more inclusive laws. This policy revision fulfills both DEIB objectives within the Strategic Plan while also allowing for more financial flexibility with site selection. **Note:** These policy revisions have been vetted, reviewed, and endorsed by the DEIB Committee.

USA Fencing Event Site Selection Inclusion Policy 11-15-2024 DEIB Feedback.pdf.....71

#### **E. National Event Site Selection**

**Motion:** To revise all applicable policies and practices to ensure that national events are selected based on the following criteria: (1) profitability, (2) accessibility, and (3) safety. These three criteria should be the principal considerations that take the greatest weight over any other considerations. While considering competing locations, only when these three criteria for competing locations are the same, USA Fencing may take into consideration other criteria. **Definitions:** (1) profitability is defined as yielding the highest financial gain (revenues-expenses) of running the event with realizable financial projections based on available historical data and partnership advantages. (2) accessibility is defined as making the events accessible to as many people as possible with reduced travel time and considering a fair geographic distribution of the events during each year, with specific considerations on direct flight/airline hubs from major fencing communities in the east and west coasts. (3) Safety is defined as safe cities with published authoritative low crime rates of each city. **Rationale:** USA Fencing policies to focus on financial sustainability and the interest of a vast and diverse membership to reduce costs to all participants, strive to partner with accessible locations, and ensure the personal safety of its members.

## **F. Task Force on USA Fencing Transgender Policy**

**Motion:** To create an ALL-female task force to re-evaluate and revise (as needed) the USA Fencing Transgender policy to ensure that fencing provides a fair playing field for girls and women, while also providing an inclusive fencing environment. The Task Force to be led by a female athlete, and include an NCAA fencer, a junior or cadet US travel team member, a senior travel team member, a female national coach, an NCAA college coach, and a transgender fencer. The policy recommendations should be supported by science and represent the views of the majority of our membership. **Rationale:** Transgender participation in women's sports remains a complex and sensitive issue. Concerns from our members highlight potential disadvantages for cisgender female athletes in areas such as college recruiting and national team selections. Empowering the diverse community of female athletes and coaches to shape the policies that best serve our sport is essential. **Considerations:** USA Fencing acknowledges the "right to compete," but also recognizes the broader landscape, including restrictions and bans in other sports (e.g., swimming and rugby), inconsistencies in state laws, and anticipated changes under new federal leadership. The goal of this Task Force, composed of female experts in fencing, is to provide a platform for informed leadership and tailored solutions specific to our sport.

## **G. Financial Task Force**

**Motion:** To create a Financial Task Force to optimize national tournament revenues while increasing honorarium/wage to essential contracted staff working at the events (e.g. referees, armors, tournament organizers). The Task Force will consist of large regional event organizers who run profitable and efficient events, so their experiences can be adopted nationally. **Specific objectives :** Come up with 3 scenarios for events, including a small event with about 3000 entries, a medium event with about 6000 entries, and a large event with about 9,000 or more entries. Determine the most profitable breakdown on each scenario and recommend the best scenario for future national events. Recommendations should include, but not be limited to, size, event categories, ratios, locations, and cost-cutting measures on overhead and travel. **Task Force :** Abdel Aziz, Igor Chirashnya, Brandon Rochelle, Emily Bian, Selina Kaing. **Board liaison:** Maria Panyi. **National Staff liaison:** Phil Andrews. **Rationale:** Although not yet finalized, a preliminary change to national events had been developed and shared with the membership. There is a risk that reducing the size of the tournaments would significantly reduce revenues, which are critical to USA Fencing's financial health. This Task Force will assist with optimizing national event revenue while also improving critical staff compensation, which ensures both profitability and sustainability in the long run.

## **H. DEIB Office**

**Motion:** Dismiss the USA Fencing DEI office and form the DEI task force instead **Rationale:** Per the USAF Diversity and Inclusion statement, "USA Fencing hopes to increase participation in the sport of fencing from communities that have historically had low participation as athletes, staff or fans by proactively working towards a greater focus on D&I throughout all aspects of the organization." [1] The DEI office has been in existence for a couple of years at a budget of ? and has not demonstrated an impact on membership diversity without financial support from third parties which could be accessed at no cost with or without assistance from the DEI office. The DEI task force should collaborate with Peter Westbrook Foundation to help the USAF create more such foundations in big metropolitan cities across the United States. [1] <https://www.usafencing.org/about> (Mission Statement)

## **I. Youth Council**

**Motion:** To establish a USA Fencing Youth Council with the following charter: **USA Fencing Youth Council Charter** **I. Purpose** The purpose of the USA Fencing Youth Council is to empower youth fencers to advocate for their peers, enhance the fencing experience for young athletes, and provide valuable input on issues, events, and programs that impact the youth fencing community. The Youth Council will serve as a bridge between young athletes and USA Fencing's leadership, contributing to the development of a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment within the sport. **II. Objectives** **Advocacy:** Represent the interests and concerns of youth fencers to USA Fencing's leadership. **Fun Brokers:** Provide recommendations on how to maintain fun in fencing as the sport grows in size and competitiveness. **Community Building:** Promote camaraderie and inclusiveness among youth fencers across the country; enhance youth participation in USA Fencing events and initiatives **Education and Awareness:** Provide resources and organize programs on topics like sportsmanship, injury prevention, and academic balancing. **III. Membership** **Eligibility:** Candidates



must be active USA Fencing youth members between the ages of 12 and 18.  
 Composition: The Council will be comprised of eight (8) athletes, ideally, but not bound to an even mix between youth eligible athletes and Cadet-aged athletes Terms:  
 Members will serve terms pursuant to those established in Sections 12.18 and 12.19 of the Amended and Restated Bylaws. Application Process: Youth Council applications will be sourced by the National Office, with selections to be made by the CEO and Chair.  
 IV. Decision-Making Per section 12.20 of the Bylaws, the Youth Council may make recommendations to the Board of Directors, Committees, or the CEO, but does not have the authority to make decisions for or to bind USA Fencing. Rationale: The Board of Directors' approval of Councils provides a unique opportunity for the creation of a Youth Council. Youth fencers are a critical stakeholder in the organization's governance body for them will allow for better advocacy, communication, and advancement of USA Fencing's strategic objectives. Change Impact Evaluation: Low. The Council will be an advocacy body for USA Fencing's largest stakeholder group. This group will have the authority to make recommendations, but not serve as a decision-making body; thus, it may be considered a low risk/low impact motion.

#### **J. Referee Development**

Motion: To form a Referee Development Strategy Working Group. The focus of this working group will be to evaluate the Referee Development Sub-Objective of the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan and develop tactics and recommendations to meet the supporting metrics and outcomes. The working group will be comprised of: Board- Damien Lehfelddt, Donald Alperstein, Molly Hill, Maria Panyi RC- All RC DEIB Committee - Annamarie Lu Staff- Shannon Jolly, Phil Andrews Rationale: With the establishment of the Referee Development Goal in the Strategic Plan, a working group is needed comprising of Board, Staff, and RC members to develop tangible tactics to best support this sub-objective of the strategic plan.

#### **K. Personal Coach Funding Task Force**

Motion: Form a task force for allocation of funds for personal coaches traveling with their athletes to World Championships. Rationale: The USA Fencing generates much more money than in the past. It's time to use these revenues to support our fencers, their coaches, and veteran fencers who represent the U.S. in the international arena. This will also help ensure that each athlete, no matter their socio-economic background, has the resources to perform at their highest potential on the world stage as they represent the United States.

#### **L. US Fencer Priority Registration**

Motion: to prioritize U.S. fencers in the registration process for USA Fencing sanctioned tournaments and ensure that the U.S. National Ranking System reflects only U.S. fencers. It aims to establish clear guidelines for the inclusion of international fencers and maintain the integrity of national rankings and competition structures. Priority Registration: All USA Fencing sanctioned tournaments, especially capped events, will have a priority registration period for U.S. fencers (U.S. citizens and permanent residents). After this period, registration will open to international fencers, with their registration closing one week before the event. National Points: International fencers and U.S. fencers representing another country in an international event will not earn U.S. national points. Only U.S. fencers participating in domestic events and representing the US in international events will be ranked in the U.S. National Ranking System. Seeding List: A Master Seeding List should be created for internal use only, including both U.S. and international fencers. This list will be only used for tournament seeding purposes. Rationale: USA Fencing must prioritize U.S. athletes in alignment with its mission. This approach mirrors the practices of other combat sports in the US, including boxing, wrestling, judo, and taekwondo, where international participants may compete in domestic events but are excluded from earning national points or appearing in national rankings. Such policies ensure equitable competition and provide U.S. athletes with opportunities to excel and gain recognition within their national system. Similarly, many European and Asian fencing nations, such as France, Italy, Korea, Japan, and China, do not honor international points, or award national points in their rankings to international fencers representing other countries.

#### **M. Travel and Expense Policy**

Motion: To develop a comprehensive travel and expense policy to enhance financial oversight, streamline processes, and ensure consistent compliance across all organizational travel, including squads, international relations (IR), referees, staff, and

Board members. Key Policy Areas: Cost Controls: Where possible, flights should be booked through a designated travel vendor (e.g., Cain Travel) for cost-efficiency and accountability. Travel partners and hotels should be prioritized based on best value, balancing cost and service quality. Implement expense caps, such as parking limited to \$25/day, and encourage room sharing or having individuals contribute 50% of the room cost unless otherwise approved. Booking Deadlines: Establish strict deadlines for travel arrangements (flights and hotels) to help secure the most affordable options and improve logistical planning. Pre-Approval Requirements: All non-standard expenses, including entertainment and meal invitations, should be pre-approved. Requests should include the business purpose, attendee list, and estimated cost. The Chair of the Board should approve expenses related to the CEO. The CEO or the appropriate reporting authority should approve all other requests. Exception Handling: Any deviations from the policy should be formally escalated with clear justification and require written approval before reimbursement. IRS Compliance: Ensure that all travel and expense policies align with IRS Travel Guidelines to maintain regulatory compliance and minimize audit risk. Rationale: Consolidating and standardizing travel policies across all groups will improve financial control and transparency. Prioritizing travel partners and hotels that offer the best value, ensuring centralized vendor use, and aligning with IRS guidelines will foster consistency, cost-effectiveness, and regulatory compliance while reducing administrative complexity.

## **N. Cadet and Junior Travel Fees**

Motion: to re-assess the current travel team fees for cadet and junior fencers for the upcoming season. The goal is to ensure that the fees adequately cover the designated staff costs and that a portion of the funds is allocated to support non-funded, medal-winning athletes. Review the current travel team fee structure, specifically for cadet and junior fencers, and adjust to account for increased travel costs yearly (e.g., CIP or actual cost-based). Ensure that the fees fully cover designated staff expenses and that any surplus is directed toward subsidizing successful athletes who have earned medals but are not otherwise funded. Rationale: Travel costs have risen over time while international travel team fees have remained stagnant. This adjustment will ensure that team expenses are fully covered while also providing financial support to successful athletes who achieve medal results but do not have funding.

## **O. Junior World Championship Hosting Financial Strategy**

Motion: To evaluate the financial, strategic, and budgetary requirements of hosting a Junior World Championships in the lead-up to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, with findings and recommendations to be presented by the September 2025 Board Retreat. Rationale: Hosting a Junior World Championships aligns with the updated Strategic Plan, fosters international collaboration with the FIE, and offers valuable opportunities for U.S. fencers and referees to participate in a prestigious event on home soil. Additionally, this would compensate for the Junior World Championships originally awarded to the United States but canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing a timeline ensures a detailed budget can be prepared, allowing for effective advocacy and formal proposals to the FIE in a timely manner.

## **P. Medal Podium Political Protest Policy**

Motion: No political statements or protests will be allowed at the venue, during the tournament and/or from the medal podium. Rationale: The USAF's mission "to grow and promote the sport of fencing in the United States..." reflects the original values of the Olympic Charter to "develop harmony." [1] Political statements, protests and demonstrations divide rather than unite. Any political statement or social protest will negatively impact the group that doesn't support it. It creates unnecessary tension in the community. If the USAF allows protests and demonstrations, it will not only be divisive for the fencing community but could create additional security costs and unnecessary negative press for USAF, especially if it's allowed to proliferate. Fencing events are an opportunity for a diverse community to bond together as they cheer for their fencer, team or club. Attendees at events – fencers, officials, referees, parents and spectators – come together to compete and enjoy the sport. There are plenty of other places and platforms where people can express their points of view. Having an apolitical policy helps ensure fencing events are a place dedicated to competition where athletes can wholly concentrate on the sport. [1] <https://www.usafencing.org/about> (Mission Statement), <https://olympics.com/ioc/olympic-values> (Olympic values)

## **Q. Tournament Format**

Motion: Adopt the new proposed tournament format that will serve fencers for upcoming seasons and many years to come (see attached). Rationale: The number of participants at NAC is growing every season. The national tournaments are becoming large and unwieldy, creating frustrations for organizers, referees, athletes, coaches and parents. We need to come up with a format that balances manageable event size, accessibility, and opportunity without negatively impacting overall NAC revenues.

#### **R. National Anthem**

Motion: Play the national anthem at the beginning of tournament days at all NACs and National Championships Rationale: This is appropriate since the USAF represents the United States. We have a very diverse fencing community, including many new immigrants, and the national anthem unites us. Playing the national anthem helps remind fencers' of their Olympic dreams at NACs and National Championships since playing the Gold medalist's national anthem is one of the first things that comes to mind as people picture the Olympics. Playing the Gold medalist's national anthem has been a tradition of the Olympics since 1924. It's a reminder by association that the USAF is the Olympic body's recognized National Governing Body for the sport of fencing in the United States. Playing the national anthem is a long tradition among major sports. Playing the national anthem supports the USAF's stated mission to "honor [the sport of fencing's] rich traditions." [1]. [1] USAF Mission statement: <https://www.usafencing.org/about>

#### **VII. Good and Welfare**

#### **VIII. Adjourn to Executive Session (as needed)**

#### **IX. Executive Session**

#### **X. Adjournment**

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# USA Fencing Hall of Fame Committee – Meeting Minutes

**Date: November 12, 2024**

- **Attendees:** Kamilla Gafurzianova – Chair, Justin Tausig – member, Simon Pitfield – member, Valerie Asher– member, Nikki Franke– member, Viktoria Kuznetsov– member.
- **Meeting Purpose:**
  - The committee convened to define roles, responsibilities, and establish a clear, fair process for inducting Hall of Fame members.
- **Key Topics Discussed:**
  - Charter & Role Definitions: Agreement to draft a committee charter outlining responsibilities and decision-making protocols.
  - Nomination Criteria: Initial exploration of a structured rubric for scoring nominees to ensure objectivity.
  - Lifetime Achievement Award: Proposal for a separate award to recognize significant lifetime contributions beyond Hall of Fame inductions.
- **Next Steps:**
  - Draft a detailed committee charter and recommend it to the Board.
  - Present a formal recommendation to establish a Lifetime Achievement Award.

# Referees' Commission Report for the USA Fencing Board of Directors

November 26, 2024

## Activity Summary – Referees' Commission Chair

**Complaints Process:** The new online submission form for complaints is live on the website. To date, seven complaints have been received. Only 1 complaint met the threshold for a hearing panel formation; the remaining 6 complaints were resolved by the RCEC Chair, Susan Belanich. No complaints were dismissed without merit.

**Referee Training:** While not well-attended at Summer Nationals, 4 referee-specific trainings were given by The People's Academy: Conflict Management Training (2) and Referee Mentor Training (2). The feedback, however, was positive. Tasha Martin, Kelly Koehler, and Phil Andrews will be meeting with The People's Academy to discuss creating online content in order to expand the availability to all referees.

**Monthly Referee Zoom Calls:** The RC continues to hold monthly referee Zoom calls.

**Spectator Abuse of Referees:** National Office staff and 2 RC members attended a meeting with USA Taekwondo, USA Wrestling and USA Hockey to discuss their experiences around spectator abuse and prevention activities. I will let the National Office provide an update on the steps they have chosen to take to mitigate spectator abuse of referees.

**New referee FAQ:** The RC DEIB Committee developed a new ref FAQ for referees new to NACs. This should be posted on the website in the coming weeks.

**Flight approvals/denials for NACs:** Tasha Martin and Sean Shumate worked with the National Office to streamline the flight approval/denial process for NACs.

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## Activity Summary - Referees' Commission: International Assignments & Development

### Vice-Chair: Kelly Koehler

FIE committee: Iana Dakova, Tasha Martin

WAS committee: Jon Moss, Sean Shumate

Cadet Advisory Committee – Tasha Martin, Iana Dakova, Adam Brewer, Laura Decker, Jelena Zeljkovic, Jason Chang, Tyler Jacobson, Morgan Partridge (AR), Dwight Smith (AR), Brian Kaneshige (AR)

### Assignments

YTD:

**Attendance & Activity:** Referee attendance requirements reviewed in August. Referees not meeting minimum standard given the opportunity to petition. Petitions received, reviewed, and ruled upon in September. FIE activity reviewed/confirmed. Updated list of active U.S. referees maintained and distributed to Referees' Commission.

**Selection:** Cadet advisory committee formed in August. Cadet advisory committees convened in August and September. Recommendations for assignments finalized in September.

**Assignments:** Referee availability requests sent and received in September. Referee assignments for junior world cups and cadet European circuits completed in September and continuously updated for issues as needed

**Remaining:**

**FIE/cadets:** Referee assignments for junior world cups will continue to be managed through JOs weekend. IWAS winter assignments beginning now.

**WAS:** LA2028 Prioritization meeting set for late November to determine assignment priorities and selection committee for the Paralympic cycle. The selection committee will be convened, availability sent to referees, and assignments made in December for February-March events. WAS summer assignments anticipated to be made in March. New process to be published in December when tournament designations are released.

**Issues:** Conflict over jurisdiction of International Assignments between RC and National Office. Going forward, National Office review of assignments has been replaced with Referees' Commission Chair review. The Chair is involved in assignments discussions and can make necessary adjustments based on communication of any documented discipline and/or safety plan from the National Office. Since the Chair is already part of international referee selection and all restrictions involving referees should already be communicated to the Chair by the National Office, this will prevent overstepping and encourage timely and thorough communication.

**Working well:** FIE Master List referees received preliminary assignments from Iana Dakova before the USA Fencing assignments were finalized. This minimized the number of cancellations by our ML referees due to conflicts, allowing them to meet their attendance requirements without petitioning. Staging WAS assignments by season helps bring WAS more closely in line with existing assigning procedures while minimizing cancellations due to WAS designations. Restructured Advisory Committee has received positive feedback and is working well. Mentors on cadet trips are providing strong support for new referees.

**Improvements needed:** WAS advisory committee needs to be expanded to include more perspectives, including filling open athlete representative position.

**Exams**

**YTD:** FIE exams were announced and the FIE committee convened for selection in August. Four selected candidates were notified in August and all accepted. Exam preparation sessions were run in September

by Zoom and for those who could not attend all sessions, individual phone meetings. All candidates passed their respective exams.

No WAS exam has been announced for this coming season to date.

**Remaining:** FIE exam candidates for the next exam will come from performance this international and domestic season. Evaluations will be given at JOs, the April NAC, and Summer Nationals to set expectations and prepare potential candidates.

WAS candidates who were not able to attend exams last season will be tracked and supported for the next opportunity. Two current WAS-licensed referees are candidates for additional licenses and will be prioritized for designated assignments held in conjunction with exams to minimize costs. WAS has few new referees to select from to test. An emphasis on domestic development of candidates has been prioritized to address deficiencies in the path.

### **Development**

**YTD:** Informal referee reviews and season planning sessions conducted in August, September, October, and November. Mentor/Head referee preparations in October, with discussions from October to current to obtain feedback on US referee work overseas.

**Remaining:** Informational sessions for FIE and IWAS progression paths will be held after junior/cadet international assignment season has ended in February. IA&D overview and weapon-specific seminars will be held at Summer Nationals. Formal reviews for referees in the FIE development pipeline (cadet assignments) will receive a progress report and plan for the next season, if they so choose, at JOs, April NAC, and Summer Nationals.

**Working well:** Feedback from head referees in Europe has improved dramatically, as well as mentor feedback and immediate communication to referees.

**Improvements needed:** Weapon-specific development seminars are time-consuming to prepare and have a very short shelf life. Relying on volunteers for this work is quite limiting.

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### **Activity Summary – Referees’ Commission: Rules Committee**

The RC Rules Committee has been engaged in responding to requests for information and clarification from USA Fencing stakeholders, including the National Office, referees, athletes, coaches, and other supporters. We address these questions through communications facilitated by the National Office or directly to the committee's email account (RCRulesandExams@refereescommission.org). This includes both specific questions submitted by members directly to the committee or via the National Office and coordination with the National Office on ensuring alignment between organizational documents such as the USA Fencing Rules of Competition and Athlete Handbook.

A comprehensive review and update of the referee exam test bank is currently underway. The first two sections (general, foil) have been reviewed and it is anticipated that the remaining three sections (epee, sabre, para-fencing) will be completed by the time of the December Board meeting. The next step after the initial review is completed is a review of exam questions that have been removed or otherwise

dropped from the test bank in recent years. Many of these removals are undocumented so a complete review will be undertaken to identify any exam questions that should be restored or that require updating. At the completion of this stage, the Rules Committee will coordinate with the National Office to update the referee exam to reflect the updated/corrected test bank. Effort will be made to ensure it is clear when the updated exam items have been introduced. Subsequent steps include identifying content that is not adequately covered by existing questions, requiring drafting new exam items, and revision of the exam study guide.

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### **Activity Summary – Referees’ Commission: Ombuds**

The RC Ombudsman group has begun to operate within a new structure of emphasis panels in addition to the previous structure of regional representation.

The group has added three new members, Brianna Smith, Judine Watkis, and Nathan Schlessinger. We are also excited to welcome Michael Ross back to the group. These individuals add to the diversity of referee experiences and perspectives within the RC Ombudsman committee.

The current RC Ombuds are:

Bobby Gibbs (Vice-Chair), Matthew Bush, Tim Bookwalter, Sue Borgos (Previous Vice-Chair), Lisa Campi-Sapery, Alan Freedman, Chad Morris, Michael Ross, Nathan Schlesinger, Judine Watkis

### **Recent Initiatives**

To increase awareness of the Ombuds role, we launched a website, [rcombudsman.org](http://rcombudsman.org). We also debuted a new communication tool to get time-sensitive tournament concerns addressed more quickly: a “NACLINe” [rcombuds\\_NACLINe@zohomail.com](mailto:rcombuds_NACLINe@zohomail.com). This email goes to a secure channel within our group that is routinely monitored. Starting with the October NAC, flyers were posted to the referee tables listing the RC ombuds mission, website, and NACLINe info. Hopefully these steps encourage more referees to seek out their Ombuds.

The Ombudsman group has revised our referee “Bill of Rights” based on feedback at the RC annual meeting. The document is currently still under review by the National Office. The next step is to have this document reviewed by the Tournament Committee before finally being sent to the Board. The Ombuds group sees the discussion around this document from multiple stakeholders as vital to reducing the burden placed on referees as our sport grows.

Other short-term initiatives are in the works spearheaded by the co-leaders of emphasis panels. Some of the short-term initiatives revolve around data acquisition. One example is identifying refs who are new to NACS, and those who have recently stepped away from national tournaments. These data initiatives from the Referee Retention panel will ultimately be used for outreach to new refs and to gain a better understanding of referee attrition. Another example is mining referee usage data from multiple sources including FencingTime. This effort from the NAC Working Conditions panel will hopefully provide a better gauge of tournament scheduling impacts from the referee’s perspective.

Other short-term initiatives and longer-term goals will be announced throughout the season. This may occur through the Referee Zoom calls in some cases. Those who will be co-leading the charge for the different emphasis panels are listed below:



Referee Retention: Bobby Gibbs, Nathan Schlesinger

NAC Working Conditions: Brianna Smith, Michael Ross

Regional Working Conditions: Oliva Curry, Judine Watkis

Policy Transparency: April Alford, Chad Morris

Abuse/Harassment: Sue Borgos, Alan Freedman

Data Resource/Accountability: Matthew Bush, Bobby Gibbs

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### **Activity Summary – Referees’ Commission: Domestic Development - National**

1. 16 referees earned their N1 rating, 93 referees renewed their N1 rating, 15 referees earned their N2 rating, 122 referees renewed their N2 ratings, 71 referees renewed their R1 ratings for the past season (for some of them are their second or tertiary weapon).
2. Creating mentee lists R1 and N2 rated referees for the NACs (did October and November NAC). October was more successful than November NAC due to fact that November NAC was understaffed but we still had close to 50 observations total). Mentee list is uploaded, maintained, and shared with referee coordinators and Sean Shumate.
3. Reviewed and updated observation form used at the NACs, used at November NAC for the first time, with the positive feedback from the assigners and observers. Observation form is uploaded to shared drive and shared with referee coordinator and Sean Shumate.
4. Created and updated Excel spreadsheet with all the pod captains, video referees and main referees that are used in the video rounds at the NAC. Started in November and will be maintaining the sheet throughout the season. Sheet will be uploaded and shared with the referee coordinators, assigners, and Sean Shumate for easy accessibility.
5. Created YouTube channel (USA Fencing Referee Development) with the idea of uploading short action videos that would be used as the teaching material for referees. Starting with the easier actions with adding more complicated actions later. Actions are presented at the Monthly referee meeting as well (one action per weapon).
6. Maintaining database for “strip calls”. Data will be uploaded to the shared drive.
7. Working on updating CRI and CRO list.

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### **Activity Summary – Referees’ Commission: Domestic Development - Grassroots**

#### **Certified Referee Instructors and Observers**

Currently 35 CRIs across the country

New Certified Referee Observers:

Kyle Roat and Alden Grasse

Currently 61 CROs across the country

The GRD Chair proposes a modification to revise CRI criteria to include initial observation at Summer Nationals for certification to give in person instruction. The modification will allow other CRIs to review and certify capability prior to seminar delivery.

**Schedule of free Referee Certification seminars during Summer Nationals (In Progress):** The preliminary schedule for the free referee seminars will be to have them in 2 4-hour segments during the first 5 days and the second 5 days of Summer Nationals. The dates are TBD.

**Migration of Certification Materials to Online Education Modules:** The team has had its initial introductory meeting at the last NAC, and discussed how the workflow will work to develop the segments will progress toward the initial four (4) hour goal. Each segment will last approximately twenty (20) minutes and require a knowledge check at the end of the segment to move on to the next segment. Workgroup members: Stephanie Stern (Lead), Mark Segal (Video Materials), Ziad Khyat (Video Capture), Andrew Fischl (Video Advisor), Lisa Campi Sapery (Advisory Only), Weapon Leads TBD

**Referee Observation Statistics Tool:** Since the deployment of the online observation tool for tracking referee ratings initial observations, renewals, and advancement in 2019, there has been an improvement in the referee rating process and developing of local and regional referees. The data however, has been difficult to quantify due to the nature of the feedback provided in a paragraph format. To streamline the process, the team will be looking at patterns of the data collected over the past seasons and work to categorize critical aspects of evaluation towards the R2 and R1 levels. Workgroup members: Alden Grasse (Lead), Aunesto Quilop (design), Bruce Gilman (data management).

**Data Analysis Team (In Development):** Since the use of the tracking tool has been critical to the development of referees at the regional level, we now need the statistics to determine if changes are actually working. GRD Chair plans to find referees that are interested in looking at the statistics over the course of the season and examine both the data, and data collection management to achieve the overall goal.

**Ratings Decay:** Working with Brandon Rochelle to integrate automated referee ratings decay.

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## **Activity Summary – Referees’ Commission: Domestic Assignments**

**Reviewed yearly Assignments:** All National events have designated Assigners and Referee Coordinators in place, and they have been notified.

**Discussed New Referee Coordinator Reporting Method:** DAC has implemented a new shareable google form or the NAC Referee Coordinator report. This will give access to multiple people to review NAC events and concerns. Members having access include the Referee Commission, DAC committee members, and others as needed.

**Reviewed and discussed Call to Strip and Referee Observation Process:** Call to strip forms that were completed at NACs with either be given to The Vice Chair of National Referee Development Jelena Zeljkovic or be scanned and sent to her or The Vice Chair of Domestic Assignments for review and tracking. Completed referee observations will be handled in the same way.

**Working action items:**

- Further discussion digital reporting forms
- Assigner/Referee Coordinator training
- Developing late call protocols

## **Ethics Committee Report**

### **November 14, 2024**

**Attendance:** Molly Hill, Greg Husisian, Kathy Vail, Kelvin Mai and Christina Pachuta as staff liaison

#### **Black Card Review Group Appointments**

The Ethics Committee appointed Kelvin Mai and Kathy Vail to the Black Card Review Group.

#### **Conflict of Interest Review**

Prior to the start of the meeting, the committee members were provided with a copy of all conflict of interest forms submitted by individuals sitting on the Board of Directors, Committees, Resource Groups, USA Fencing National Office Staff, and those who sit on disciplinary hearing panels – a total of 143 forms. The committee thanks everyone for taking the time to complete these forms with honesty and candidness. The committee would like to first point out that more than likely our members have been selected to be a part of these groups because they are engaged and involved members within the fencing community and have been named to these groups not in spite of but because they have an interest in the sport. Overlapping interests are going to be expected and generally do not pose a concern or risk. We utilize these forms so that we can identify conflicts to make sure we are managing them appropriately, not to prohibit anyone from continuing to engage in a meaningful way.

During the review process the main factor the group was looking at were those who are in a position in which they have a direct financial benefit from USA Fencing or hold a position in which they would have some sort of other personal benefit from. The committee placed members into 1 of three categories:

1. No Conflicts – to generally include coaches, referees, parents, athletes, independents, etc., with no business or other relationships with USA Fencing;
2. Very Minor Conflicts – to generally include club owners or those with Division or other strong leadership roles; or
3. Moderate Conflicts – to generally include those directly involved in a business or company that may or does engage with USA Fencing in a mutually beneficial way. The committee would like to bring to the attention of the Board of Directors the following individuals and their relationship with USA Fencing:
  - o Donald Anthony – Absolute Development and Exchange Foundation (VP and Board member) and SwordSport.com LLC (CEO and Founder)
  - o David Blake – Video Replay (USA Fencing contractor), Absolute Fencing (contractor), and reseller of replay video systems including Fencing RePlay and Fencing Vision.
  - o Brandon Rochelle – Design Sensory – registration and membership services (part owner).
  - o Dan Burke – Fencing Time (developer/owner)
  - o Brian Rosen – StripCall (phone application developer/owner).

While the committee is notifying the Board of these specific conflicts, the committee does not see these as being conflicts which should prevent these individuals from participating in a meaningful way in their respective roles. The disclosed items are ones that the committee believes only need to be shared with the Board so that they can be taken into consideration in the decision making process. The committee is aware that these persons provide important services to USA Fencing and thanks these individuals as the services they provide to USA Fencing and its members are essential to our administrative and event operations, which greatly aid in the running of events and in other ways.

### **Other Business**

1. The committee made the following suggestion for items for improvement for the 2025-26 conflict of interest review cycle:
  - For instances when someone is declaring a conflict with an affiliated person, to update the form to ask the name of the affiliated person.
2. The committee made some suggestions related to FenceSafe signage, mainly the verbiage on the locker room signs placed outside the bathroom doors at National events, and to place more signage inside stall doors.
  - National Office staff will look into making some adjustments accordingly.

### **Items for Discussion at the Next Meeting**

1. Sports Betting Policy
2. Non-Disclosure Agreements for all or some Committee/Resource Group members
3. Conflict of Interest forms for referees and potential improvement of randomized assignments to avoid said conflicts

## **Report of the USA Fencing Division Resource Team**

### **For USA Fencing December 2024 Board Meeting**

The Division Resource Team (DRT) had its first meeting of the season on November 11<sup>th</sup> and will continue to meet monthly. The initial meeting was structured to review and outline the season's work and to introduce and orient new members. The work will focus on the following three items, finishing the Bylaw and Division Operating Guide adoption, providing resolutions on non-functioning divisions, and resolving division boundary issues, in addition to ongoing assistance to division officers.

#### **Division Officer and Financial Forms**

52 divisions have completed the officer and financial forms, up from 21 from the previous season.

The DRT provided insights into improvements to the reporting forms to be explored for next season.

#### **Finish the Bylaw/DOG Adoption**

As of November 27, 2024:

- 87% of Active Divisions have adopted the new bylaws.
- 57% of Active Divisions have adopted the new bylaws and the new division operating guides.

Continuing from the previous reports, the DRT is continuing to provide support to divisions as they work through these governance documents. The passed and approved documents can be found on USA Fencing's website.

#### **Resolutions on Non-Functioning Divisions**

Through the bylaw and division operating guide work, the division resource team found a number of non-functioning divisions. The goal of this work is to identify the impact of non-functioning divisions and their impact on members geographically located there. Resolutions are to be determined based on findings.

#### **Resolve Division Boundary Issues**

Through the bylaw and division operating guide work, the division resource team uncovered areas of the country that are covered by multiple divisions, ambiguous boundary definitions, and some unserved areas of the country. Resolutions are to be determined based on findings.

## **International Relations Committee**

### **YTD Status Report**

**Nov 30, 2024**

Overall Chair: Kelly Koehler

Overall Board Liaison: Andrea Pagnanelli

Overall Staff Liaison: Phil Andrews

#### **IRC Administrative Group:**

Kelly Koehler (Chair), Jennifer Yamin, Scott Rodgers, Sean Shumate, Felicia Zimmermann, Phil Andrews (ex officio, non-voting), Kat Holmes (Athlete), Alex Massialas (Athlete)

#### **FIE Subcommittee:**

Jennifer Yamin (Chair), Kelly Koehler, Iana Dakova, Don Anthony, Saul Mendoza, Felicia Zimmermann

Ex officio members (non-voting): Jeremy Summers, Carl Borack, Lorrie Marcil-Holmes, Greg Massialas, Rita Comes, Donald Alperstein, Alexander Massialas, Phil Andrews (or designee), Damien Lefeldt (Chair of the Board)

#### **WAS Subcommittee:**

Scott Rodgers (Chair), Donald Alperstein, Theodore Li, Gabrielle Sabharwal, Sean Shumate, Kathy Walters

Ex officio members (non-voting): Cat Howard, Gil Pezza, Jon Moss, Phil Andrews (or designee), Damien Lefeldt (Chair of the Board)

### **IRC Administrative Group Report**

YTD: With both subcommittees preparing for their respective elective Congresses and the new structure, the primary focus has been to facilitate understanding of new structures and roles and support the new subcommittee chairs.

Upcoming: The Administrative group will be meeting in January to look at aligning Committee mission with current USA Fencing strategic plan priorities, outlining the timeline and goals for the Quad leading up to LA 2028, and begin succession planning for all roles at the international level.

### **IRC FIE Sub-Committee Report**

The IRC FIE Sub-Committee has held two meetings since the formation of the newly appointed committee. The first meeting took place on October 31, 2024, following the release of candidates for the upcoming FIE Electoral Congress in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, scheduled for November 30 to December 1, 2024. The second meeting was held on November 18, 2024.

#### **October 31, 2024- IRC Sub-Committee meeting #1.**

The IRC FIE Sub-Committee held its first meeting to plan for the upcoming FIE Electoral Congress.

#### Special Guests:

- Peter Barten: FIE Ethics Committee candidate
- Selina Kaing: Women's Council candidate
- Maria Panyi: Board Member and First Delegate to the FIE Congress

#### Key Discussion Points:

1. Electoral Congress Planning:
  - Logistics and voting strategies for all commissions and committees were prioritized.
  - A voting preference spreadsheet was created to gather input from members and coordinate outreach efforts to secure support from other nations for U.S. candidates.
2. Credentialing Concerns:
  - Issues regarding access to Congress events were discussed.
3. 2028 Junior and Cadet World Championship Bid:
  - The importance of bidding for the event was emphasized as a strategic move to enhance visibility and positioning.
  - An email chain was initiated to continue discussions regarding the possibility of hosting the event.
4. 2027 Senior World Championship Host Vote:
  - The committee voted for the possible host of 2027 Senior World Championship.

The meeting concluded with a focus on finalizing voting strategies.

#### **November 18, 2024 – IRC Sub-Committee Meeting #2**

The IRC FIE Sub-Committee held its second meeting to finalize voting strategies and address key preparations for the upcoming FIE Congress.

#### **Key Discussion Points:**

1. **Voting Strategy:**
  - All members' input was valued, and candidate requests were honored in determining voting preferences.
  - The committee finalized votes for the FIE Presidential election and most committee and commission positions.
2. **Logistics and Communication:**



- Logistics and communication plans were confirmed, though the detailed daily schedule is still pending.

### 3. **Proposal Review and Decisions:**

- The committee reviewed and voted on three proposals:
  - **Legal Proposal**
  - **Rules Proposal**
  - **2028 Olympic Quota Proposal (submitted by the Egypt Fencing Federation):**

The two designated delegates will cast their votes in Congress in accordance with these decisions.

### **IRC WAS Sub-Committee Report**

Subcommittee meeting Oct 31, 2024

Attendees: Scott Rodgers PLY, Donald Alperstein, Sean Shumate, Kathy Walters, Phil Andrews, Jon Moss, Damien Lehfeldt, Andrea Pagnanelli, Kelly Koehler, Gabrielle Sabharwal

Committee met to prepare for World Para Fencing Congress to be held on Nov 11, 2024.

Meeting started with an overview of relationships between various entities that govern para fencing.

Scott Rodgers and Phil Andrews are going to represent the USA at the WPF Congress. Gabrielle Sabharwal has been put forth as the US representative to Exec Committee

Committee discussed various motions to be voted on and how the USA wanted to voted. Key questions in wording were brought up relative to several of the rule clarifications, additions, and modifications to be discussed with WPF leadership.

Discussed the various candidates for the exec com.

Next expected meeting: follow-up from Congress date TBD.

Meeting adjourned

## World Para Fencing Congress and Elections Trip Report

Gabrielle Sabharwal and Dr. Scott Rodgers arrived for the world cup events prior to the congress. During this time, they met with members of other delegations to get support for Gabrielle's candidacy for the exec committee. Scott also competed in the World cup events. They met with World Abilightsports staff to better understand the reassessments and major activities being performed in the upcoming quad.

Phil Andrews arrived the day prior to the congress and joined Scott and Gabi in meeting with heads of World Abilitysports and heads of other delegations. Gabi was well received and elected to the EC at the congress.

Scott and Phil met with Udo Ziegler and Arno Schneider to go over some clarifications to the rules that had been proposed. They provided satisfactory clarifications and acknowledged that some of the wording needed to be clarified.

The congress followed the draft agenda with no changes. The congress ran smoothly and ended ahead of schedule just before lunch. There were no major debates. Please see the summary below.

#### Key rule changes that were approved:

(see congress documents for complete set of changes):

- 1) At Paralympic games, World Championships, and zonal championships an athlete can only fence in two individual weapons. In the team events they may fence all three weapons.
- 2) Repechage will start at the round of 8 at the Paralympic games and round of 16 at the World Championships
- 3) The world rankings will cover a 2-year rolling period and consist of the best 6 world cup results, 3 satellite results, latest world championships or Paralympics, and the latest zonal. The weighting factor for zonal's has been reduced to 1.2 (from 1.5) and World Championships has been reduced to 2.0 (from 2.5).
- 4) Fencer salute required at the conclusion of each bout
- 5) Zonal games and world cups have been added to the list of competitions where one national uniform is required. (mask is only considered as part of the national uniform at the Paralympic games)

#### Congress Summary:

November 11, 2024. Pisa Italy

USA Representatives: Dr. Scott Rodgers, Phil Andrews, and Gabrielle Sabharwal

Countries in attendance (18 voting out of 35): Brazil, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Poland, Korea, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Ukraine, Great Britain, United States

Meetings from previous meeting were approved.

Reports on reassessment of athletes was presented. Need to update classification with paperless system. Implemented medical doc form for all to upload and cards for exemptions related to equipment and involuntary movement. All athletes will go through reassessment during the upcoming season. Reassessment started in Pisa with cat A athletes that were present and will continue at events until all have been reassessed.

Received report on Promotion activities.

Committee reports from Referee, SEMI, and disciplinary will be sent out with the minutes.

The congress received the World Abilitysport Handbook chapter 2, Operational Regulation for World Para Fencing (these replace the IWAS Wheelchair Fencing Bylaws) and chapter 3, Regulation 6: sport Congresses.

Rule changes and updates already implemented were presented for comment.

The following motions were approved:

Rule changes, updates, and clarifications of the rules in rules book 1 – Technical Rules

Rule changes, updates, and clarifications of the rules in rules book 2 – Organizational Rules

Rule changes, updates, and clarifications of the rules in rules book 1 – Material Rules

Motions from member countries followed:

Canada Motion: Failed

- Format next World Championships shall consist of pools followed by direct elimination without repechage

Iraq Motion: Motion was not seconded and did not move to vote

- Require straps to prevent lifting or allow athlete/coach to request judges be replaced

Italy motion: Passed

- Apply to IPC for “P” credentials

Ukraine motion: Passed

- Limit athletes to compete in 2 individual weapons at Paralympic games, World Championships, and European Championships (it is assumed, but not clarified that this will be modified to zonal championships and not just European). Athletes are allowed to compete in all three weapons for team events.

Received Paris feedback.

Presented with 2025 calendar

Elected 2025-2028 executive committee

Chair: Pal Szekeres (Hungary) (unopposed)

Vice Chair: Arno Perillier Schneider (Brazil) (unopposed)

Americas: Gabrielle Sabharwal (USA)

Europe: Alain Febvre (France)

Asia: Karl Wong Kam Kau (Hong Kong)

Gender Equity: Christina Massiala (Greece)

Member at large: Mark Perelmann (Germany)

Following the election, the congress was briefly shown the new logo for world para fencing. It is expected to be launched in January of 2025.

The congress adjourned.

# USA Fencing Transgender & Non-binary Policy Proposal

## I. Introduction

USA Fencing is committed to ensuring its members have the opportunity to participate in USA Fencing sanctioned events on a fair, inclusive and safe basis without fear of discrimination. We recognize our responsibility to provide safe and meaningful competition at all levels of development and performance.

Currently, USA Fencing operates from a [transgender and non-binary policy](#) that errs on the side of inclusion. This policy provides guidelines for allowing athletes to participate in events in a manner consistent with their gender identity/expression, regardless of the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

We value the diversity that exists within our membership and will continue our zero-tolerance policy on discrimination, which includes homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. We are committed to fostering inclusive environments that champion all involved in our sport.

As new concerns and research are presented on transgender participation in sport, USA Fencing is committed to its responsibility to review its transgender and non-binary policy as necessary to ensure safe and fair competition for all.

## II. The Review

To honor USA Fencing's commitment to review its transgender and non-binary policy alongside new published research, the organization consulted with its medical advisory group, Mt. Sinai, and a coalition of legal consultants on trans and LGBTQIA+ rights who represent diverse stances on trans-athlete inclusion.

All parties reviewed the most recently published research on transgender participation in sport, alongside USA fencing's current policy and those of other organizations, such as British Fencing, etc. and advised the following recommendation:

*No changes be made to the current policy. As it stands, there is not enough new research to suggest implementing stronger restrictions on transgender athletes specifically. It is also recommended that USA Fencing not subject transgender*

*athletes to testing throughout the season, but should instead continue to allow the membership renewal process to serve as the athlete's proof of medical adherence for the season.*

Despite the above recommendation, USA Fencing recognizes that there may be concerns regarding its transgender and non-binary policy. Thus, we are proposing two policy options for consideration outlined below.

### **III. The Scope**

The proposed policy options are designed to provide clarity for the participation of transgender and non-binary individuals participating in USA Fencing sanctioned events. The proposed policy will not apply to:

- Unsanctioned USAF events or activity

### **IV. Membership Profiles**

All USA Fencing members are permitted to willingly change their gender identity to that of which they identify in the "Personal Information" section of their membership profile. This does not define eligibility to participate in events and therefore does not impact competition gender.

### **V. Policy for Domestic Competition**

#### ***Option I. Nanomole Requirement for transgender women***

There are studies that suggest testosterone plays a significant role in athletic performance. While the appropriate medical adherence reduces testosterone levels, a threshold of 10 nmol/L for at least 12 consecutive months have been found to balance inclusion and the reduction of physiological advantages. This threshold aligns with previous policies established by the IOC to ensure consistency across global sports governance. See below for the suggested policy guidance.

#### **Youth (Y10, Y12, Y14) Athletes**

- Transgender and non-binary athletes competing in youth events are permitted to compete in the gender category with which they identify, without restriction.
- Registration and/or other documents submitted on behalf of a minor must be submitted by, or with the express approval of a parent or guardian.

### **Cadet, Junior, Senior & Veteran Athletes**

- Transgender male athletes
  - Athletes who have received a medical exception for treatment with testosterone for purposes of USA Fencing sanctioned competitions may compete in men's events and are no longer eligible to compete in women's events.
  - Athletes who are not on medical treatment related to gender transition may participate in either men's or women's events. This will be logistically binding for the concurrent season.
- Transgender women athletes
  - Athletes being treated with testosterone suppression medication, for the purposes of USA Fencing sanctioned competitions may continue to compete in men's event category. Athletes who wish to compete in the women's category must adhere to the following requirements:
    - Submit substantial proof that the concentration of testosterone in serum has been less than **10 nmol/L\*** continuously for a period of at least 12 months
      - Substantial proof may be considered, but not limited to the following:
        - Medical documentation or written certification from a qualified doctor or physician
        - Results of blood tests conducted by a licensed medical laboratory
        - Prescription or treatment history
          - Documentation of hormone therapy, including dates of initiation & dosages

- Athletes must keep serum testosterone concentration below **10 nmol/L** during the eligibility to compete in the female category of competition.
- Non-binary athletes:
  - Athletes are permitted to compete as the gender of which they identify as at the time of membership renewal. However, if an athlete wishes to compete as a gender different from the identity associated with the sex assigned at birth, they must adhere to the aforementioned guidelines for transgender athletes
- *Important considerations*
  - Testing – it should be assumed in good faith that once an athlete presents their proof of compliance during membership renewal that they will remain in compliance during the competitive season.
    - It is the responsibility of the athlete to report any deviation~~nces~~ from consistent medical adherence to the USA Fencing national office. Failure to notify the national office will result in a disciplinary action from Compliance and Athlete Safety.
  - Confidentiality
    - All medical data should be handled with strict confidentiality to protect the athlete's privacy
    - Once proof is submitted, the data will be coded to protect the athlete's identity
- Ranking & Points
  - Ranking and points will remain as they are under the current policy

### ***Option II. Mixed Event Category***

- USA Fencing sanctioned events will offer a women's and mixed or mixed/men's events category. The Mixed event category will either replace the men's category or be offered in addition to the men's and women's event categories. The following guidelines should be applied to each category.



- Women's category: Athletes who are biologically female (born female at birth). Transgender girls/women who have not started hormone treatment will still be eligible to compete in the women's category.
- Mixed category: All individuals (including transgender and non-binary athletes) will be eligible to compete in the Mixed Category
- Men's Category: Athletes who identify as men – both biological males and transgender men.
- Considerations for Rankings, Points and systems
  - A ranking system will be established for mixed, men's, and women's categories for domestic competition and championships
  - National events ranking system for national team selection
    - Separate points will be calculated for biological men & biological women
    - National rankings for mixed category cannot be used for national team selection
  - Tool updates for design sensory for gender selection categories- ensuring the correct individuals are allowed to register for each event category

## **VI. International Competition**

Any athlete who qualifies for competitions hosted by the International Fencing Federation (FIE) World Championship or World Abilitysport, are to adhere to the compliance requirements set forth by said organization's transgender and non-binary policy. Failure to adhere to that organization's transgender and non-binary policy guidelines may impact the athlete's participation in international competition.

For the updated international transgender policies, please refer to the [International Olympic Committee](#), [FIE](#) and [World Abilitysport](#).

## **VII. Appeals**

Appeals are to be reported in accordance with all disciplinary procedures and dispute resolutions as listed in the [Athlete Handbook](#).

#### **VIII. Anti-Doping Requirements Remain Applicable**

In accordance with the FIE, it is the responsibility of the athlete to monitor testosterone level(s) and submit appropriate documentation to satisfy anti-doping policies.

If hormonal medications utilized for gender transition are listed on the World Anti-Doping Agency's Prohibited List USADA can grant a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE). The TUE application process is thorough and designed to balance the need to provide athletes access to critical medication while protecting the rights of athletes to compete on a level playing field.

Further information regarding the TUE application process can be found [here](#).

#### **IX. Reporting Grievances**

Abuse and/or harmful acts towards the transgender and nonbinary community will not be tolerated. An instances or grievances should be immediately reported to USA Fencing Compliance and Safe Sport , as well as the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Complete the short online [reporting form here](#).

**\*\* It is important to note that there may be existent laws per state that have implications on the adherence to the proposed policy. In such case, it is the responsibility of that event host(s) or individual(s) to make USA Fencing aware.**

**Policy development governing transgender and non-binary participation in sport is a fluid and ongoing phenomenon. As new research on physiological effects of gender transition on athletic performance emerge, policies are subject to reevaluation and change to ensure they reflect the most current evidence-based information. \*\***

#### **Vocabulary**

- **Gender** - Broadly, gender is a set of socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate (see Social Construction Theory).
- **Gender Binary** - A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.
- **Gender Identity** - One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender Expression** - External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.
- **Cisgender** - A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.
- **Mixed-category** – Indication that the category is open to all gender identity(ies).
- **Non-binary** - An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.
- **Transgender** - An adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. People who are transgender may also use other terms, in addition to transgender, to describe their gender more specifically. Use the term(s) the person uses to describe themselves. It is important to note that being transgender is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. A person can call themselves transgender the moment **they realize that their gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth.**

### **Related Research Studies:**

Tidmas V, Halsted C, Cohen M, Bottoms L. The Participation of Trans Women in Competitive Fencing and Implications on Fairness: A Physiological Perspective Narrative Review. *Sports*. 2023; 11(7):133. <https://doi.org/10.3390/sports11070133>

FBASES, R. B., & Hicks, K. (2021). The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences Expert Statements. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 39(S2), 1-66.

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**Report of the USA Fencing Coaches Committee  
For USA Fencing December 2024 Board Meeting**

The Coaches Committee had its first meeting of the season on December 1, 2024, and will continue to meet on a regular cadence. The initial meeting was structured to review the USA Fencing's Youth Development Resource Team report on Y8 fencing. Future meetings will outline the coaches' committee's mission and focus on supporting USA Fencing's strategic initiatives.

**General Recommendations of the Coaches Committee regarding the Y8 format.**

- The Committee recognizes that opinions about the usefulness of Y8 competitions differ, but that at this time these competitions are an existing category that is already being fenced at local and regional levels, and it behooves USA Fencing to ensure that these competitions are run in a way that is developmentally responsible.
- Overall, the Committee agreed with the conclusions of the Youth Development Resource Team's Y8 report that it would be premature to include Y8 as a National or Regional Category of fencing with associated rankings and points lists.

**Agrees with the recommendation to not add the Y8 National Championship event.**

- At some point it might be worthwhile to include Y8 at Summer Nationals as a test event and a way to build interest and excitement in this age category. This would require community feedback.

**Offer athletes the choice of #0 or #2 blades.**

- The use of #0 blades should be optional and that Y8 fencers should be allowed to use #0 or #2 blades at the discretion of the coach or fencer. Allowing #0 or #2 blades reduces the burden of constantly switching out weapons as fencers age up and has little impact on the actual fencing. It was pointed out that #0 epee blades were particularly stiff and were more prone to deliver harder hits, which might be discouraging, and is an additional argument in favor of allowing #2 blades.

**Consider allowing regional organizers the option of running different formats.**

- The Committee was split on the use of the modified format. There was an observation that the two-pool format might be difficult to explain to parents, coaches, and fencers. The Committee recommends allowing more than one format for Y8 events: the "sharks and minnows" format and the normal pool to DE format. Using two formats in various competitions would generate feedback from fencers, parents, and tournament organizers about any significant impacts on the competition environment.

**Limiting strip size and blades the committee could create confusion and extra cost concerns.**

- The committee agreed that changing the size of the playing field, by making it shorter, would have little impact on the performance of Y8 fencers.

December 2, 2024

**Monitoring Y8 events and soliciting community feedback.**

- In the coming seasons it is going to be important to monitor the Y8 fencing events held across the country for additional feedback and information from Parents, Fencers and Coaches.

*This concludes the Report of the USA Fencing Coaches Committee for the USA Fencing December 2024 Board Meeting*

## **Tournament Committee Meeting Minutes | November**

Date: 11.14.2024

Location: Virtual

Members Present: Brandon Rochelle (Chair), Nathan Anderson, Dan Berke, David Blake, Maggie Dull, Alan Geller, Laura Johnson, Rich Weiss

Staff: Phil Andrews, Glen Hollingsworth, Shannon Daugherty

Board: Damien Lehfeldt

Absent: Jennie Salmon, Sean Shumate

**Summary:** The committee continues its work towards final draft recommendations for revisions to the tournament pathway system prior to additional stakeholder and membership review. At our November meeting, the focus was primarily on regional events as the feeder to national events, as well as a discussion about event sizes and formats for our national events. We anticipate sharing additional format, point, and pathway recommendations at the beginning of the year.

### **National Events Formats and Feedback from National Coaches**

- Discussions amongst a selection of national coaches and board members regarding our national event formats have been ongoing
- As previously proposed, the committee is focusing its efforts on event sizes of approximately 160-180 people in individual events with multiple divisions (previously referenced as Elite and National)
- Discussions remain ongoing as to when the final field will be set for each NAC with options presented based on regular fee deadline, or the evening prior to the event

### **Regional Schedule & Fixed Calendar**

- Discussions continued on scheduling and sustainability of the regional calendar
- A fixed calendar, where event combinations for each weekend are predefined, was presented by National Office staff to the committee. Tournament organizers would bid to a predefined weekend and combination. Event organizers would be allowed to add local-level scoped events to a regional tournament within the predefined schedule if they can demonstrate staffing and scheduling sustainability.
- Post-meeting, an email vote was held and the committee has recommended a fixed regional calendar be implemented, with approximately one weekend per month per region reserved for local/club-level activities. The Tournament Committee will review the regional calendar alongside the national office yearly.

### **Collaboration and Future Meeting Preparation**

- The committee has formed a Slack channel and consolidated file sharing for more discussions between meetings as we work toward final recommendations on the tournament pathway structure.

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 12 @ 7:00pm EST (4:00pm PST)

# Draft Minutes - Board Meeting

## Annual Meeting

### USA Fencing Board of Directors

Sunday, September 15th at 8:00am (MT)– Salt Lake City, UT and Zoom

#### I. Roll Call

**Present:** Damien Lehfeltdt, Donald Alperstein, Peter Barton (Parliamentarian), Emily Bian (Treasurer), Lauryn DeLuca, Andrey Geva, Molly Hill, Kat Holmes, Mike Joo, Selina Kaing, Amanda Nguyen, Andrea Pagnanelli, Maria Panyi, and Abdel Salem.

**Absent:** Ben Bratton, Darryl Jacobs, and Nzingha Prescod

**USA Fencing Staff:** Phil Andrews, Tabitha Chamberlin, Christina Pachuta

**A moment of remembrance was held in honor of Bob Dow OLY.**

**A brief financial update was provided by Tabitha Chamberlain.**

#### II. Committee, Resource Groups, and Task Force Updates (as applicable)

- a. Tournament Committee Report ([Appendix A](#))
- b. Data Resource Group Report ([Appendix B](#))
- c. Black Card Review Group Report ([Appendix C](#))
- d. Grievance and Disciplinary Committee Report ([Appendix D](#))
- e. International Relations Committee Report ([Appendix E](#))
- f. Referee Commission Meeting Notes ([Appendix F](#))
- g. Nominating Committee Report ([Appendix G](#))

#### III. Consent Agenda (Mr. Lehfeltdt)

- a. Approval of the July 6, 2024 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes ([Appendix H](#))
- b. Approval of the minutes from the Email Vote on July 24, 2024 ([Appendix I](#))
- c. Approval of the September 13, 2024 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes ([Appendix J](#))
- d. Approval of the Updated Member Code of Conduct as submitted by the DEIB Committee ([Appendix K](#))



- e. Approval of Updates to the Complaint and Hearing Procedures as submitted by the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee ([Appendix L](#))

**Second:** Lauryn DeLuca

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

#### IV. Old Business

**MOTION (Mr. Lehfelddt):** That the following amendments to the USA Fencing Amended and Restated Bylaws effective as of February 17, 2024 (“Bylaws”), be approved for publication pursuant to Bylaw Section 14.2.a, and that they be considered for adoption at the next meeting of the Board following the required comment period.

To amend Section 7.4b of the bylaws as follows:

Independent Directors. There shall be ~~three (3)~~ **two (2)** Independent Directors. All Independent Directors shall be individuals who meet the qualifications and are selected as specified in this Subsection 7.4.b.

**Rationale:** The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee only requires one Independent Director. This recommendation was set forth by the Gender Equity Task Force.

That Section 7.6.b be amended to read in its entirety as follows:

**Independent Directors.** Independent Directors shall serve two-year terms commencing on the first day of September and ending on the last day of August. ~~OneTwo~~ Independent Directors shall be selected in even numbered years and one Independent Director shall be selected in odd numbered years. Directors fulfilling the unexpired portion of a vacated position shall serve the remainder of that term.

**Rationale:** The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee only requires one Independent Director. This recommendation was set forth by the Gender Equity Task Force.

**Motion to lay on the table indefinitely (Mr. Lehfelddt)**

**Second:** Molly Hill

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

#### V. New Business

##### *International Relations Committee Structure*

**MOTION 1 (Ms. Hill, on behalf of Task Force on Committees and Resource Groups):** That the International Relations Committee (IRC) be restructured to house two sub-committees for FIE and WAS, as well as have a primary committee that will draw from the two sub-committees. The sub-committees will meet regularly on their own, as will the primary committee for knowledge-sharing between the able-bodied and

parafencing communities. Members of each subcommittee and primary committee are voting unless otherwise noted below.

The primary committee will have:

- A chair (this role will be highly administrative to support the subcommittees, track deadlines, etc)
- Athlete representation from each subcommittee
- The chair of each subcommittee
- One non-chair designee from each subcommittee
- CEO of USA Fencing or their designee as a non-voting advisor
- Chair of the Board of Directors of USA Fencing as a non-voting advisor

Each subcommittee will have:

- A chair
- Athlete representation, with weapon and gender diversity as possible
- Members with experience and understanding of the respective international community
- Ex-Officio members who hold positions in the respective international community, who are non-voting advisors unless selected as a full committee member. If they lose their office and are not selected as a full committee member, they will lose their seat on the subcommittee and if applicable the primary committee unless the Board votes to add them as a continuing member.
- National Office representation (likely CEO) as a non-voting advisor
- Chair of the Board of Directors as a non-voting advisor

**Rationale:** The current structure and committee (members, athlete representatives, ex-officio members) are exclusively focused on FIE knowledge and experience. While this group contains decades and generations of fencing experience and knowledge, it is exclusively within the FIE. WAS knowledge and experience are equally as important for international relations of USA Fencing. There needs to be the same resource for FIE and WAS International Relations. WAS representation in a predominantly FIE group is not adequate.

Furthermore all members of these subcommittees are heavily involved in fencing, with most balancing domestic fencing, international events and commitments, and many with outside employment. Availability for meetings and work is difficult at best and the time demands of each community often conflict (e.g. the FIE committee is very busy this week while WAS is preparing for the Paralympic Games and would be unavailable). Two separate committees would better respect committee members' time and interests and logistically allow the most efficient work, while an overarching committee will allow for knowledge sharing and a consistent strategy across international relations for USA Fencing.

**Second:** Damien Lehfeldt

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

### *Budget Committee*

**MOTION 2 (Ms. Hill, on behalf of Task Force on Committees and Resource Groups):** That the following prospective amendments to Section 12.7.b of the Amended and Restated Bylaws be approved for publication pursuant to Bylaw Section 14.2.a, and that this amendment be considered for adoption at the next meeting of the Board following the required comment period:

That Section 12.7.b. be amended to read in its entirety as follows:

b. Composition. The Budget Committee shall consist of six voting members: the Treasurer, who shall be Chair of the Budget Committee; three other members of the Board of Directors elected by the Board; and two athletes who meets the qualifications required in Appendix II, one of whom shall be female and one of whom shall have qualified as a parafencer. The Chief Executive Officer of the USFA, or another staff member designated by the Chief Executive Officer, shall be a non-voting member of the Budget Committee. **Two representatives of the general membership with relevant financial experience shall be selected by the Board to be non-voting members of the Budget Committee.** Members shall serve terms of one year.

**Rationale:** Financial experience is crucial to the Budget Committee and besides the Treasurer, the other members from the Board of Directors and athlete representatives might be limited in that regard. Drawing on our membership to fill that gap is a way to ensure that the Budget Committee has the resources it needs to make well-informed decisions.

**Second:** Maria Panyi

**Motion Withdrawn (Molly Hill and Maria Panyi)**

### *Committee Appointments*

**MOTION 3 (Ms. Hill, on behalf of Task Force on Committees and Resource Groups):** To approve the composition of Committees, Resource Groups, and Councils for the 2024-25 season as provided to the Board, details of which are provided in [Appendix M](#) which includes Chairs and Board Liaison appointments, as well as the end date of the terms for members of committees with staggered terms. If the selected members of these groups do not fulfill the requirements for their positions (e.g. Conflict of Interest forms, SafeSport training, etc) within 45 days, they will automatically be removed from their group(s) and their vacancy will be filled by the Board of Directors. Furthermore, the Chairs of each group (or Staff Liaison if there is no Chair) will maintain attendance records to be reviewed by the Board of Directors at their next September meeting to ensure compliance with Section 12.17 (sets expectation of attendance of no less than two-thirds of committee meetings).

**Rationale:** The committee task force has reviewed all 233 applications and provided the Board of Directors with recommended appointments for the 2024-25 membership year. Staggered terms were not previously tracked or enforced despite their inclusion in the by-laws, so setting explicit term expirations for the relevant committees is important to start staggering from scratch.

The mandate to fulfill the requirements in a timely manner is intended to reduce the amount of effort the National Office undertakes each year to ensure compliance with our by-laws.

The task force also emphasizes the importance of engagement and encouraging compliance with Section 12.17 moving forward, especially given that committee terms are now two years instead of one (unless otherwise noted).

\*At the time Ms. Hill brought the motion, she made the motion with the change to remove the two community members recommended for the Budget Committee per the results of the previous motion. Ms. Hill also placed emphasis that Board Liaisons (unless otherwise appointed) are not voting members of the respective committees.

**Second:** Damien Lehfeldt

**Result:** Passed by a roll call with a vote of 7-yes and 2-abstain

#### *International Nominations to FIE Congress*

#### **MOTION 4 (Ms. Hill):**

Per the recommendation of the International Relations Committee, the following be put forward as nominees to the FIE and World Ability Sport for the 2024 Electoral Congresses, and/or recommend that these candidates be appointed as appropriate.

ComEx: Don Anthony Jr\*

Veterans: Rita Comes\*

Coaches: Greg Massialas OLY\*

Athlete: Alexander Massialas OLY\*

Medical: Jeremy Summers\*

Legal: Lorrie Marcil Holmes

Disciplinary Panel: Donald Alperstein\*

Rules: Kelly Koehler\*

Referee: Iana Dakova\*

SEMI: Ted Li

Fair Play: Jennifer Yamin\*

Women's: Felicia Zimmerman OLY

Ethics: Peter Barton

Promotion and Marketing: Carl Borack\*

Voting Delegates (2): TBD

Wheelchair Fencing Executive Committee: None\*\*

Voting Delegate 1: Scott Rodgers PLY

Voting Delegate 2: Phil Andrews

\*Indicates an incumbent.

\*\*World Ability Sport are likely to appoint a US individual to the Executive Committee for Wheelchair Fencing per the recommendation of the World Ability Sport Wheelchair Fencing Chair.

**Rationale:** The upcoming Electoral Congresses for the FIE and World Ability Sport respectively provide an opportunity for the United States to put forth candidates for positions in these respective International Federations. The International Relations Committee has focused on FIE knowledge and electability; and therefore for this event has put forward the incumbent occupants of these roles with a commitment to seek new potential candidates for the 2028 Electoral Congress should membership want to be considered for such positions. With respect to Commissions and Councils for WAS, these will be appointed at a later Congress in early 2025; so nominations will be put forward to the Board for their approval/consideration at the appropriate juncture in time.

**Second:** Andrea Pagnanelli

**Motion moved to Executive Session (see below)**

#### *Compensation and Review Committee*

**MOTION 5 (Ms. Panyi):** To approve the Compensation and Review Group of USA Fencing for the 2024-25 season, to include the following which are to be appointed by the Chair with approval of the Board of Directors:

The Chair of USA Fencing: Damien Lehfeltd

Independent Director (1): Andrea Pagnanelli

Athlete Representative (1): Lauryn DeLuca (pending approval of the Athlete Council)

At-Large Director to serve ex-officio (1): Abdel Salem

**Rationale:** USA Fencing will review the performance, compensation, and development of its' CEO every year with an interim review every 6 months, to be completed prior to the internal staff review series. The following process shall be used by the group to review the performance of USA Fencing's CEO:

- Reviewing initial objectives provided by the hiring group of USA Fencing.
- Soliciting feedback (Positive and Constructive) from the remainder of the Board of Directors.

- Soliciting feedback, if any, from direct reports to the CEO.
- Group meeting to discuss performance of the CEO relative to the objectives.
- Delivery of the review to the CEO.
- Delivery of a presentation and report to the USA Fencing Board of Directors in executive session.

**Second:** Andrea Pagnanelli

**Motion to Amend (Damien Lehfelddt):** To add the treasurer as ex-officio member.

**Second:** Lauryn DeLuca

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**Result of Motion as Amended:** Passed by voice vote

### *Hall of Fame*

**MOTION 6 (Ms. Panyi on behalf of the Hall of Fame Committee):** To submit the following list of candidates for induction into the USA Fencing Hall of Fame:

- **Dick Pew** (1964) – previously approved. Olympian, 4<sup>th</sup> Place finish in Epee at the London Olympics.
- **Herb Cohen** (1965) – Two Time Olympian, National Champion, Pan Am Champion, NCAA Champion
- **Eugene Glazer** (1966) - Two Time Olympian, National Champion, Pan Am Champion, NCAA Champion
- **Byron Krieger** (1968) passed away in a house fire - – Two Time Olympian, National Champion, Pan Am Champion, NCAA Champion
- **Neil Diamond** (1969) Long time fencing supporter and contributor to US Fencing, and the Westbrook Foundation
- **Gerrie Baumgart** (1970) – previously approved
- **Ruby Watson** (1971) Passed Away – previously approved
- **Sally Pechinsky** (1972) – Olympian – 2 time NIWFA National Champion
- **Andy Shaw** (1973) – previously approved
- **Tom Losonczy** (1975) – previously approved. – Two Time Olympian, National Champion, Pan Am Champion, NCAA Champion
- **Jon Moss** (1976) – previously approved
- **Peter Harmer** (1977) – previously approved
- **Steve Kaplan** (1978) – previously approved

**Rationale:** One of the final things the Hall of Fame Committee considers of utmost importance is to bring in a group of athletes, coaches and contributors to make up for the lost 27 years of zero inductees. Had there been inductions for those 27 years, of the 5-6 we are currently bringing in, there would already be almost 150 more deserving

individuals in the Hall. This was not a good service to our athletes, coaches and contributors who have given so much to the sport.

The committee unanimously approved Chair Mormando's suggestions to do this. The Hall of Fame Committee put together a list which was unanimously approved by the committee. The list includes 13 names. Many of which have been previously nominated. Our suggestion is to bring these honorees into the Hall in two waves with the first wave coming in at 2025 Summer Nationals in Milwaukee and the second in the following 2026 Summer Nationals. Focusing on the first group those that are in their 70, 80, and 90s. It is important to honor them while we can!

Chair Mormando also suggests that in future at the dinners, one speaker introduces each Hall of Fame inductee. This would control the time at least on that end to keep the show moving on.

Further, this group Hall of Fame induction will not interfere in the nomination and induction of the class of 2026.

Those approved will be inducted next year or the following and will be added to one of the missing years only for our records. Obviously, some were not even involved with fencing in the years I put. But that is the first 13 years with no Hall of Fame. There are still at least 14 years that we could bring in anyone we have inadvertently overlooked. This group contains athletes that have represented the USA at 11 Olympic games and contributors that have refereed at the Games.

**Motion to refer to the Hall of Fame Committee to review further**

**Second:** Molly Hill

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

*Proposed Bylaw Changes from the July 6, 2024 Board Meeting*

**MOTION 7 (Ms. Hill):** That the bylaw amendment proposals put forward at the July 6, 2024 Board meeting, see [Appendix N](#), be adopted.

**Rationale:** Pursuant to Bylaw Section 14.2.a, these bylaw amendments were published to the membership for review and feedback following the July 6, 2024 Board meeting. The required 45 day comment period has passed and these proposals are now to be considered for adoption.

At the time Ms. Hill brought the motion, she made the motion with the change to the proposed change to Bylaws Section 12.18.c be amended to read:

c. Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Referee's' Commission shall serve terms commencing on ~~September~~**August** 1 of the year in which they are selected and ending on ~~August~~**July** 31 four years later, with the Chair, Ombudsman, and Vice-Chairs of Domestic

Development – Grassroots and Domestic Development – National being selected in the years when the Summer Olympic Games are regularly scheduled to be held and the other members of the Referees’ Commission selected in the even numbered years between regularly scheduled Summer Olympic Games. The acceleration or delay of the Olympic Games shall not affect the terms of Referees’ Commission members.

Rationale: The Referees’ Commission requested this change for several reasons. First, the Commission holds its important annual meeting in August, after the July 31 close of the fencing season, and individuals who will constitute the Referees’ Commission for the coming cycle should be in place by the time of that meeting. Additionally, the new season starts in August and competitions are being held before September 1 or early that month, and the actions taken at the meeting, including referee ratings and rule interpretations need to be in place as early in the season as possible.

**Second:** Lauryn DeLuca

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

### *Board Meeting Recordings*

**MOTION 8 (Mr. Lehfeldt):** That the following amendments to the USA Fencing Amended and Restated Bylaws effective as of July 6, 2024 (“Bylaws”), be approved for publication pursuant to Bylaw Section 14.2.a, and that they be considered for adoption at the next meeting of the Board following the required comment period.

To amend section 7.14 of the bylaws as follows:

**Board Transparency.** Except for privileged or confidential matters taken in executive session, the Board of Director’s actions shall be available to members. Regular, Special and Emergency meetings of the Board, except with respect to matters discussed in executive session, shall be open to members of the USFA, provided that the member bears the cost of attendance. Minutes of each meeting, except with respect to matters discussed in executive session, shall be published on the USFA web site and otherwise be made available to members of the USFA. Minutes of each meeting shall include attendees at meetings, potential conflicts of interest, motions made and actions taken, Directors who recuse themselves due to an apparent conflict of interest, and a non-confidential description of any actions taken by the Board during executive session. Every reasonable effort will be made to publish the minutes within thirty (30) days of the Board meeting.

All meetings open to the public shall be recorded and posted online to the organization’s video channel at the discretion of the National Office for the public’s consumption within thirty (30) days of the Board meeting. The Chair reserves the right to request the recording be paused when absolutely necessary. The National Office shall remove recordings from applicable video channels after 365 days of being posted.



**Rationale:** In the spirit of transparency and providing additional information for the general membership's consumption to complement the published minutes, it is recommended that recordings of the Board's Zoom calls in public session be posted.

**Motion Withdrawn (Damien Lehfelddt)**

*Roll-Call Voting*

**MOTION 9 (Mr. Lehfelddt):** That the following amendments to the USA Fencing Amended and Restated Bylaws effective as of July 6, 2024 ("Bylaws"), be approved for publication pursuant to Bylaw Section 14.2.a, and that they be considered for adoption at the next meeting of the Board following the required comment period.

To amend section 7.14 of the bylaws as follows:

**Board Transparency.** Except for privileged or confidential matters taken in executive session, the Board of Director's actions shall be available to members. Regular, Special and Emergency meetings of the Board, except with respect to matters discussed in executive session, shall be open to members of the USFA, provided that the member bears the cost of attendance. Minutes of each meeting, except with respect to matters discussed in executive session, shall be published on the USFA web site and otherwise be made available to members of the USFA. Minutes of each meeting shall include attendees at meetings, potential conflicts of interest, motions made and actions taken, Directors who recuse themselves due to an apparent conflict of interest, and a non-confidential description of any actions taken by the Board during executive session. **In roll-call voting, a record of how each member voted, as well as the result of the vote, will be published in the minutes.** Every reasonable effort will be made to publish the minutes within thirty (30) days of the Board meeting.

**Rationale:** Under Section 7.20c of USA Fencing's bylaws, "procedures at meetings shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised)."

Within Robert's Rules of Order, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition it's written that "In roll-call voting, a record of how each member voted, as well as the result of the vote, is entered in full in the journal or minutes." (45:52, Page 400)

It is also written that "Taking a vote by roll call...has the effect of placing on the record how each member...votes...It is usually confined to representative bodies, where the proceedings are published, since it enables constituents to know how their representatives voted on certain measures." (45:44, Page 398)

Updating Minutes publication procedures to be in line with the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of Robert's Rules will allow for more individual accountability to our constituents and promote transparency with our members.

## **Motion Withdrawn (Damien Lehfeldt)**

### *USA Fencing Treasurer Financial Access*

**MOTION 10 (Mr. Salem):** The USA Fencing treasurer will have complete and unabated access to all USA Fencing financial information by September 30, 2024 or sooner.

**Rationale:** To enable the USA Fencing Treasurer to directly perform their duties daily more accurately and efficiently with access to all pertinent financial information. Unfettered access should lead to additional economic opportunities for the expansion of the organization.

**Second:** Molly Hill

**Motion to Amend (Molly Hill):** To change to motion in its' entirety to read as follows:  
To add to the financial policy that the treasurer continues to have access to the financial records of the organization to the satisfaction of the treasurer.

**Second:** Maria Panyi

**Result:** Passed by voice vote with one opposition

**Result on Motion as Amended:** Passed by voice vote with one abstention and one opposition

### *Olympic and Paralympic Survey*

**MOTION 11 (Mr. Salem):** Instructs the National Office to conduct a survey focused on the experience of the cadre and athletes involved in the 2024 Paris Olympics and Paralympics. The survey will assess the experience of USA Fencing's delegation in the areas of:

- Competition Experience
- Athlete Support & Resources
- Logistics & Organization
- Well-Being and Mental Health
- Media and Public Exposure
- Overall Satisfaction & Recommendations

The national office will have the authority to explore additional areas as they see fit.

**Rationale:** Under the "Competitive Excellence" and "Membership Retention" sub-objectives of the "Sports Excellence" goal of the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, USA Fencing seeks to "strengthen the high-performance pipeline and deploy resources"

Conducting a survey of our Paris 2024 participants will help to ensure USA Fencing operates in the spirit of continuous improvement while also advancing the Sports Goal of our Strategic Plan. The results of this survey will help us to fortify our strategic plan while enhancing the experience of our valued athletes, coaches, and staff for future international events.

**Second:** Andrey Geva

**Result:** Defeated by voice vote

#### *USA Fencing Club Insurance Policy Publication*

**MOTION 12 (Mr. Salem):** That the US Fencing make the club insurance policy available to all the club owners that have joined as club members and are due the insurance.

**Rationale:** As our strategic plan strongly recommend, it is the right and the responsibility of the club owners, their staff, and the fencers to be familiar with what is in the policy. The club owners pay for the insurance, which they must follow.

#### **Motion Withdrawn (Abdel Salem)**

#### *Y8 Tournament Format*

**MOTION 13 (Mr. Salem):** A motion to reconsider the previously approved Y8 format tournament changes. These changes are recommended for the 2024-2025 season and are required for the new 2025-2026 season.

**Rationale:** There is no need for a new policy that could hurt our future fencers. Changes should improve the environment for young fencers and improve their overall fencing experience. Items to be considered include shorter blade length for Y8 fencers, shorter strip length and competition format.

**Second:** Maria Panyi

**Motion to Amend (Damien Lehfelddt):** Request that the Coaches Council and Tournament Committee, by January, meet to review and propose a Y8 format recommendation for 2025-26 season. To revoke the most recently made changes and revert to the previous Y8 format.

**Second:** Maria Panyi

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**Result of Motion as Amended:** Passed by voice vote

### *Black Card Policy Updates*

**MOTION 14 (Mr. Lehfeldt):** To approve the Black Card Policy as presented by the Black Card Review Group in [Appendix O](#).

**Rationale:** As noted in the Black Card Review Group Report in [Appendix C](#), the Black Card Review Group is recommending these policy changes to better align with USA Fencing Complaint and Hearing Procedures and to permit flexibility to impose sanctions beyond a 2-month suspension when circumstances warrant it.

**Second:** Molly Hill

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

### *International Relations Task Force*

**MOTION 15 (Ms. Panyi):** To create a Task Force to explore how International Relations should be included in the US Fencing Strategic Plan and what metrics (KPIs, ROI, etc.) should be considered. The Task Force to deliver its recommendation by or before the December 2024 Board of Directors meeting.

Task Force:

Maria Panyi Board Liaison

Emily Bian - The Treasurer of USA Fencing

Molly Hill - At-Large Board member

Jennifer Yamin - International Relations Representative

Scott Rogers - Para Fencing Representative

Kat Holmes or Designee - Athletes Council

Andrea Pagnanelli - Independent Board member

Phil Andrews, The CEO of USA Fencing, or Designee.

**Rationale:**

1. The current Strategic Plan does not include International Relations.
2. The Bylaws of the US Fencing Association states under Article II Purposes, Section 2.1 that The Purpose of the USFA shall be: "To serve as a National Governing Body for able bodied and Paralympic fencing ("Fencing") in the United States, and in that capacity to fulfill the lawful obligations imposed on national governing bodies and to enjoy the privileges and prerogatives accorded national governing bodies by United States Law, the USOPC, FIE, and IWAS."

**Second:** Molly Hill

**Motion to Amend (Lauryn DeLuca):** To appoint an additional member to be selected by the International Relations Committee.

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

**Result of Motion as Amended:** Passed by voice vote

## **VI. Good and Welfare**

Next meeting will be December 14 at 10am MT via Zoom.

### **Motion to Recess to Executive Session (Damien Lehfeltdt)**

**Second:** Lauryn DeLuca

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

## **VII. Executive Session**

**The two voting delegates to the FIE are to be Jennifer Yamin and Maria Panyi.**

**Motion 4 (see above).** Passed by voice vote

### **Motion to Recess back to Public Session (Damien Lehfeltdt)**

**Second:** Lauryn DeLuca

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

### **Motion to Adjourn (Molly Hill)**

**Second:** Damien Lehfeltdt

**Result:** Passed by voice vote

## **Reporting Dates of Committees & Resource Teams**

<b>Committee/RT</b>	<b>Date of Last Report</b>	<b>Report This Meeting</b>	<b>Board Liaison</b>
Referee Comm.	7/6/24	Yes	Donald Alperstein
Ethics Committee	5/18/24	No	Molly Hill
Hall of Fame Comm.	12/16/23	No	Abdel Salem
Audit Comm.	5/18/24	No	Mike Joo
Budget Comm.	5/18/24	No	Selina Kaing
Election Comm.	7/6/24	No	Damien Lehfeltdt
Nominating Comm.	2/17/24	Yes	Molly Hill
DEIB Comm.		No	Lauryn DeLuca
IR Comm.	7/6/24	Yes	Andrea Pagnanelli
SEMI Comm USA	10/22/22	No	Abdel Salem
Tournament Comm	5/18/24	Yes	Damien Lehfeltdt
Veterans Comm.	7/6/24	No	Maria Panyi
Grievance and Discipline		Yes	Peter Barton

Division RG	5/18/24	No	Donald Alperstein
Parafencing RG	5/18/24	No	Lauryn DeLuca
Sports Medicine RG		No	Kat Holmes
Sports Performance RG		No	Nzingha Prescod
Coaches Council	12/16/23	No	Andrey Geva
Data Science RG	12/16/23	Yes	Kat Holmes
Parents Council			Ben Bratton

## **Task Force to Integrate International Relations into the Strategic Plan Meeting Summary**

### **Motion (September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Board Meeting):**

To establish a Task Force to evaluate the integration of International Relations into the USA Fencing Strategic Plan, and to determine the appropriate metrics (KPIs, ROI, etc.) for assessing its impact. The Task Force is to present its recommendations no later than the December 2024 Board of Directors meeting.

### **Task Force Members:**

- Maria Panyi – Board Liaison
- Emily Bian – Treasurer, USA Fencing
- Molly Hill – At-Large Board Member
- Don Alperstein – International Relations Representative
- Jennifer Yamin – International Relations Representative
- Scott Rogers – Para Fencing Representative
- Kat Holmes or Designee – Athletes Council
- Andrea Pagnanelli – Independent Board Member
- Phil Andrews, CEO of USA Fencing, or Designee

### **Rationale:**

1. The current USA Fencing Strategic Plan lacks focus on International Relations.
2. Article II, Section 2.1 of the US Fencing Association's Bylaws outlines the purpose of the organization, which includes serving as a National Governing Body for both able-bodied and Paralympic fencing in the United States. This responsibility encompasses fulfilling the obligations set forth by U.S. law, the USOPC, FIE, and IWAS, emphasizing the need for a structured approach to International Relations.

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## **Task Force Meeting #1 (October 10, 2024)**

### **Goals:**

1. Identify key international relations needs for the coming years, particularly in preparation for LA 2028.
2. Review and consider revisions to two sections of the Strategic Plan: Sports Excellence and Para Fencing Advancement.
3. Assign relevant metrics to track the progress of these initiatives.

## Meeting Outcome on International Affairs and Influence

1. **The “Why”** (Why pursue international influence?)
  - **Legal obligations** imposed by TSAOSA, USA Fencing Bylaws, and potentially USOPC bylaws
  - **Preservation of the integrity and reputation** of the sport
  - **Ensure fair treatment** of USA Fencing athletes and officials in areas such as competition and SafeSport
  - **Advance other strategic objectives** (e.g., supporting sport excellence and para fencing)
2. **The “What”** (The hierarchy of international involvement)
  - **Our Core Values and Ethical Stances:** What we believe in and will not compromise
  - **Our Aspirations:** What we aim to achieve
  - **Realpolitik:** What we must do to meet our aspirations while upholding our values
3. **The “How”** (International Strategic Plan Elements)
  - **Hosting FIE and WAS events**
  - **Influence by securing key positions** for our people within PanAm Fencing Confederation, FIE, WAS
  - **Support USA Fencing members** who are of international origin or dealing with other federations (e.g., nationality changes, disciplinary issues)
  - **Succession planning:** Identify and recruit referees and others with international administrative potential

### Detailed Discussion Points:

1. **Support fencing at the highest level** on the international stage through legal obligations, promoting the sport, ensuring a fair playing field, and building brand awareness as a fair play partner.



2. **Proudly uphold our values** and demonstrate high ethical standards, striving for fairness in all roles. Increase international influence to achieve our aspirations without compromising core values.
3. **Hosting events (considerations):**
  - Zonal junior and senior championships (FIE and WAS)
  - Junior Worlds (U.S. was supposed to host this during the pandemic; around \$800k was earmarked for it. Utilizing these funds would reduce assets)
  - Plan for a Senior Épée event after 2028 (largest group in the U.S. and internationally, with the least results in Men's Épée but the most income potential due to high participation)
    - Monitor for and apply to host any canceled épée events between 2025-2028
    - Evaluate interest in hosting a Junior Épée World Cup locally
  - *Note: we are currently hosting a junior sabre event.*

#### **International Positions:**

- **More elected and appointed positions** lead to greater influence. Key areas are the Executive Committee and Referee Commission. Tashkent will be critical for determining our status for the next four years.
- While **upholding our values**, we also need to engage effectively and **partner with the FIE**. Holding FIE positions and hosting events helps achieve this.
- **Succession planning is vital**: Referee development is one of the best paths, along with recruiting elite athletes and others willing to serve in international roles.

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#### **Task Force Meeting #2 (October 23, 2024)**

#### **Goals:**

1. Refine the language from the brainstorming session and develop more specific language for the Strategic Plan.
2. Address any items not discussed or requiring further clarification.

## **Final Strategic Plan Verbiage:**

### **Suggested Edits for Strategic Plan based upon IR Task Force Feedback:**

#### **Para Fencing Advancement**

##### **EDIT 1**

**“Representation & Awareness” to read the following:**

Actively promote para fencing and pursue equitable representation of US para fencing voices with both USA Fencing and World Ability Sport to drive awareness inside and outside of the Para fencing community and to advance the interests of USA Fencing para fencers.

##### **EDIT 2:**

##### **Metric:**

- Representation in at least 80% of World Ability Sport Commissions, Councils and Fencing Board, preferably inclusive of the Executive Committee.
- Host at least one World Cup, Zonal or equivalent World Ability Sport event by 2028.

#### **Sport Excellence**

##### **EDIT 1:**

##### **New area**

**“International Reputation and Influence”**

Actively engage with the international Fencing community to be seen as an influential leader within the sport; advance our core values of ethics and integrity on and off the international playing field; and plan for succession in our international representation.

##### **EDIT 2:**

##### **Metric:**

Host available and financially viable FIE Events, Congress, and Networking Events, to include at least one FIE competition.

Devise and Execute strategic election, succession and integration plans to ensure FIE representation by USA Fencing in 2028 and beyond.



USA  
FENCING



USA  
PARAFENCING

# USA Fencing

## Board Charter:

### Cultural Considerations



USA  
FENCING



USA  
PARAFENCING



# Board Charter: Summary



USA Fencing Board  
Charter



## Board Charter: Summary

### Be Respectful

Moving towards kindness, gratitude, and collegiality

### Be Engaged

Learning in before, during, and after meetings

### Strive for Continuous Improvement

Progress, not perfection

### Be Members of a United Board – Inside and Outside the Boardroom

Working as one unit to build trust with each other and our members

### Focus on Governance

Christina Pachuta - 2024-12-03 22:43:21 UTC  
USA Fencing (United States Fencing Association, Inc.)  
Focus on governance to leave an enduring legacy on Fencing



USA  
FENCING



USA  
PARAFENCING

# Board Culture



## Board Charter

### 1. Be Respectful

2. Be Engaged

3. Strive for Continuous Improvement

4. Be Members of a United Board

5. Focus on Governance

## Value #1

# Be Respectful

### How We'll Operate



Respect the personalities and perspectives of every individual on our Board.



Operate with gratitude towards each other and the national office



Demonstrate collegial professionalism and respect your colleagues' opportunities to speak



Trust your colleagues, trust our committees, and assume positive intent



Look forward, not backwards



Honor your colleagues' time, honor our membership's time



Be receptive to feedback– both challenging and good



Interact with our members with kindness, grace, empathy, and patience

## Board Charter

1. Be Respectful

**2. Be Engaged**

3. Strive for Continuous Improvement

4. Be Members of a United Board

5. Focus on Governance

## Value #2

# Be Engaged

### How We'll Operate



Come prepared for every meeting, having read the complete agenda and supporting materials. We will respect each other's time.



We will attend meetings (exigent circumstances aside)



Let your voice be heard...one voice at a time.



We will be responsive and attentive to the needs of the committee/s we support.



Demonstrate active listening



During meetings we will only converse with those in the room



Phones away when we're in public session

## Board Charter

1. Be Respectful

2. Be Engaged

**3. Strive for Continuous Improvement**

4. Be Members of a United Board

5. Focus on Governance

# Value #3 Strive for Continuous Improvement

## How We'll Operate



Communicate and collaborate with bravery, transparency, and compassionate candor



Create and follow efficient processes



Bring big ideas



Progress, not perfection



Think outside the box, challenge the status quo, and support new ideas in private and public



Lean on the perspectives and expertise of our colleagues to challenge how we do things; use other NGB's best practices where applicable



Care for our members and improve their experience in our sport



Be receptive to ideas originating from outside of the fencing community



## Board Charter

1. Be Respectful
2. Be Engaged
3. Strive for Continuous Improvement

### 4. Be Members of a United Board

5. Focus on Governance

# Value #4

## Be Members of a United Board – Inside and Outside the Boardroom

### How We'll Operate



Respect the decisions of the Board, even when we vote in the minority



Champion the strategic plan and promote initiatives to the community



Where appropriate, use social media to engage directly with our members and speak with a unified voice



Own mistakes, face the music, and accept responsibility – Individual and collective missteps



Praise publicly, criticize privately



Commitment to confidentiality for matters discussed in executive session or disciplinary issues (until explicitly made public)



No factionalism, but one united Board



Be mindful of how our decisions impact different stakeholder groups

## Board Charter

1. Be Respectful
2. Be Engaged
3. Strive for Continuous Improvement
4. Be Members of a United Board

### 5. Focus on Governance

# Value #5

# Focus on Governance

## How We'll Operate



Have a laser focus on governance; the national office will be trusted to make operational decisions and vice versa



Demonstrate good governance by making fiscally responsible decisions



Create and enforce policies/bylaws that improve member experience, member safety, and hold ourselves to industry-leading ethical standards



The Board has one Employee: the CEO. We do not manage the national office staff or provide feedback on them unless explicitly requested.



Proactively identify risks and advise on mitigation



Embrace and enhance diversity; operate to include members of our community



USA  
FENCING



USA  
PARAFENCING

## Governance Guardrails: Where we Play (And Where we Don't)



# Operations vs. Governance

## Where We'll Focus

### Governance

We Play Here

- Matters related to our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan
- Budget/Finance Oversight
- Compliance and Ethics
- Bylaws Management
- Significant Corporate Action (Oversight)
- Management of Governance Committees
- Advising on risks/issues
- Advising on matters impacting coaches/athletes
- Board Structure/Roles
- Policy Development/Oversight
- Representing Member Concerns
- Rulebook/Athlete Handbook
- Appeal Body
- Support Advising, Hiring, and CEO Performance Management

We Avoid Here

### Operations

- NAC Management/Venue Selection
- Management of National Office Staff
- Day to Day Work & Operational Tasks
  - Event Management
- Marketing/Communication/Promotions
  - Membership Programming
  - Sports Medicine
  - Sport Performance
- SafeSport Compliance Management
  - Development
  - Policy Enforcement
- USOPC Relationship Management
  - Website Management
  - Budget Development

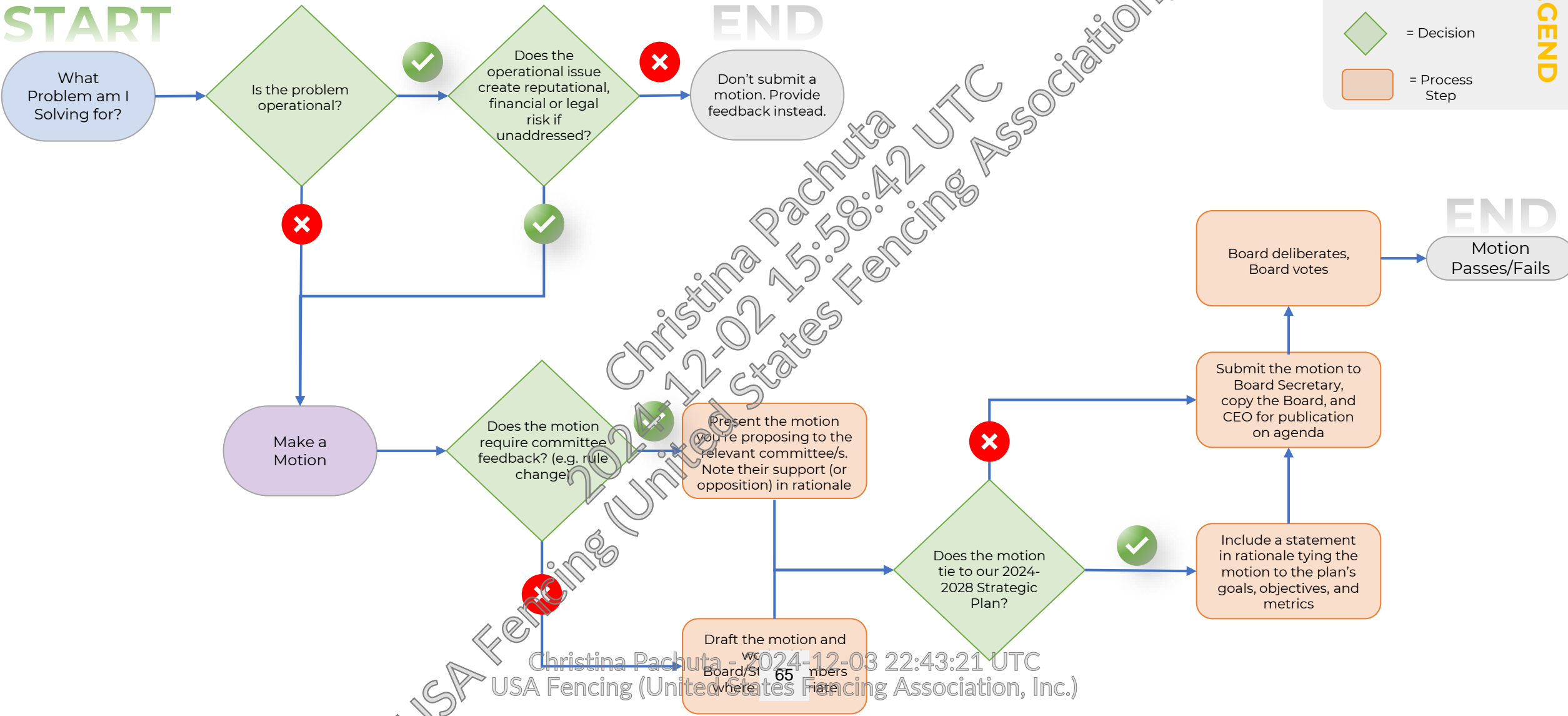
### Grey Area

- Crisis management
- Referees (have governance and operational components)
- Fundraising
- Program Oversight of Strategic Plan Initiatives
- Strategic Plan initiatives with operational overlap
- Official positions of the NGB
- Membership interaction
- International Relations



# How we Make Motions

START



Christina Pachuta - 2024-12-02 15:58:42 UTC  
USA Fencing (United States Fencing Association, Inc.)

Christina Pachuta - 2024-12-03 22:43:21 UTC  
USA Fencing (United States Fencing Association, Inc.)

## Nominating Committee Report

### Independent Director Nominations

Jackie Dubrovich, Molly Hill, Kat Holmes, Harrison Hue, Cody Mattern & Iana Dakova

November 29th, 2024

### **Process**

The process spanned three months and included three rounds of interviews with all members of the Nominating Committee. The initial number of nominated candidates was 20. These candidates were either nominated by Board Members or had previously indicated interest in serving in a leadership capacity for USA Fencing. We began the process as follows:

- (1) We began initial communication by extending the interview process to each candidate and gauging his/her initial interest. If a candidate declined, we removed them from the candidate list. This reduced the list to 12 eligible candidates.
- (2) We scheduled the first round of interviews with two members of the Nominating Committee per each candidate. The focus of the discussion was to learn more about each candidate's background, determine if he/she had relevant experience that would fill in identified gaps (i.e. legal or financial expertise, organizational growth, previous Board experience, engagement level, etc.) and hear their ideas about how they could positively impact USA Fencing.
- (3) The Nominating Committee then met after the first round to discuss which candidates should proceed to the second round of Zoom interviews/in-person coffee chats. We promoted two candidates directly to the third round based on how much of a positive impression they initially made.
- (4) 7 total candidates were promoted to the second round. We then shuffled the interviewers from the Nominating Committee to interview candidates they did not speak with in the first round. The Nominating Committee then came together again to parse out which of the candidates should be promoted to the third and final round.
- (5) The final round consisted of all members of the Nominating Committee sitting in on a final interview with 4 candidates. The goal of this final interview was to finalize how each candidate would incorporate their individual corporate and previous Board experience (if applicable) into the Independent Director role. After careful deliberation and a ranked choice system, we narrowed down the three candidates that we ultimately recommend for the two open Independent Director positions and one alternate.

## **Decision**

Based on three rounds of interviews with all of the members of the Nominating Committee, we came to the following recommendations. (1) Nominate Marie Donoghue as our top choice to fill the first Independent Director role whose term will end Fall 2026. (2) Nominate Jade Burroughs as our second choice to fill the second Independent Director role whose term will end Fall 2025. We strongly believe these two candidates will be best suited to fill in the gaps that currently exist on the Board and ultimately contribute to the implementation of USA Fencing's strategic plan. We also would like to recommend Andrew Lee and Zrinka Ducic as third and fourth alternates, respectively.

## **Rationale on Decision**

Please see below the reasons why we chose to nominate Marie Donoghue and Jade Burroughs:

- 1) Marie Donoghue comes from an impressive legal background in corporate law with a focus on contract negotiations, media rights, IP and win/win partnerships. She fills the gap in legal experience on the Board. Marie has worked in sports media and tech (ESPN, Amazon, Disney and Draftkings) and has a very strong network USA Fencing can leverage. Marie voiced interesting ideas regarding expansion, media and corporate sponsorships in the lead-up to LA 2028 and has ample Board experience to draw from. Marie also briefly fenced on the Columbia Fencing team, so she has a personal connection and investment in the sport. The interviews with Marie were particularly insightful and purposeful, and she will be a great collaborative partner for the Board.
- 2) Jade Burroughs currently is a VP at the NFL and is working closely on growing flag football for the LA 2028 Olympic Games. This is important for USA Fencing because she understands how to thoughtfully expand niche, emerging sports and how to utilize marketing and corporate sponsorships effectively to bring audience awareness. Jade also works with many stakeholders across the NFL (C-suite executives, General Managers, the players, referees, etc.), so she understands the symbiotic relationship and balancing priorities between all of them. She started her corporate career in the Big Ten Conference, and we believe her experience in the NCAA bodes well for USA Fencing since that is a huge focus for our organization. Jade's people management and organizational growth skills coupled with her excitement and clear understanding of USA Fencing's strategic plan impressed the Nominating Committee.
- 3) Andrew Lee is also a very strong candidate who most notably was the former Chair of USA Lacrosse. His diverse and impressive Board experience across many different industries speaks to his adaptability and wide-ranging expertise. He mentioned that his strength is aiding Boards in going from "good to great", and he is an expert in



governance. With this in mind, we believe he would best serve as an advisor on the new Governance Committee, rather than an Independent Director. We believe his aptitude for Board oversight, strategic planning and risk management will be an asset to the Governance Committee, and this is why the Nominating Committee ranked him as the first alternate.

It is important to note that the Nominating Committee is working on codifying this process for all future Board appointments and will follow up with a formal proposal to amend the by-laws.

Signed,

*Jackie Dubrovich, Chair of the Nominating Committee*

*Molly Hill, Kat Holmes, Harrison Hue, Cody Mattern & Iana Dakova, Members of the Nominating Committee*



*Seasoned sports business professional with over 18 years of experience spanning professional sports, college athletics, and sports agency work. Proven trusted advisor and partner to senior leadership/C-suite executives. Specialties include strategic planning and advising; executive reputation management and brand positioning; problem solving; project management; optimizing team performance; and relationship building.*

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

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### National Football League (NFL)

Vice President & Chief of Staff, Football Operations – New York, NY

**December 2019 – Present**

- Specializing in efficient administration, team management, and day to day operations of the Executive Vice President of Football Operations and the Football Operations department
- Leading an executive operating team and senior leadership team that can execute in a timely manner on a variety of Football Operations projects for optimal support of EVP and the department
- Creating systems and processes to streamline operations among Football Operations' senior leadership team. Partnering with the senior leadership team to facilitate the flow of information to and from the EVP
- Researching, benchmarking, analyzing data, and making recommendations where appropriate
- Providing robust briefing materials prior to meetings, events, etc., and prepping the EVP on the pertinent details. Ensuring that the EVP is prepared in advance for media appearances, interviews, video recordings, and critical writing
- Monitoring information flow; Acting as the gatekeeper, ensuring EVP's involvement in a project or decision-making process at the right moment
- Managing the effective clear and consistent communication between the EVP and the League's stakeholders inclusive of clubs, owners, players, coaches, League staff, and partners
- Leading weekly sr. staff meetings and quarterly all staff meetings; determining goals and objectives, formulating agendas and materials, and structuring the discussions
- Overseeing Football Operations' report outs at all Owners' Meetings, the Annual Meeting, and with football committees
- Managing various projects and/or ad-hoc requests from the EVP; sometimes in a lead position or as a representative of the EVP
- Leading the integration between football and the NFL Media team. Ensuring proper understanding of football goals and priorities. Building out proper storytelling opportunities for the advancement of the game. Examples include *NFL Explained: Officiating*, *Behind the Stripes* (Pilot phase, shadowing an officiating crew on game days), and the Emmy Winning film "*The Jimmy Raye Project*"
- Played a key role in the development of the NFL 7-Point Mobility Plan and the passing of policy changes in Diversity Equity & Inclusion. DEI policies include an enhanced Rooney Rule, an expanded media policy, changes to the Anti-Tampering Policy and rewarding minority football personnel development
- A key contributor to the NFL's success during the challenging 2020 COVID season. Led communication with the In-Season Competitive Advisory Committee –committee of football experts that advised NFL senior executives on game related COVID contingency plans. Successfully completed a full 256-game season and full post-season

Sr. Director, Football Business Operations & Strategy – New York, NY

**November 2017 – December 2019**

- Identified collaborative opportunities interdepartmentally on areas that represent Football Operations' business goals and implemented strategies and KPIs for success
- Audited Football Operations activities and business operations to ensure alignment with league and departmental business goals and priorities. Leading the process with department business planning and forecasting
- Led the NFL's celebration of *College Football's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* during the *NFL100* season. This leaguewide initiative involved collaboration with various internal and external stakeholders
- Spearheaded the development and launch of the NFL Campus Connection program with Columbia University and Howard University. Utilizing these institutions to further research and provide recommendations for senior leadership on key NFL priorities in areas of Social Justice, Officiating, Name, Image & Likeness (NIL), Flag Football, and the Future of Football
- Developed the NFL Experienceship program giving HBCU college students job experience at NFL tentpole events
- Oversaw the NFC Roster at Pro Bowl 2018 & 2019. Primary NFL contact for 44 players throughout the week ensuring a successful Pro Bowl experience for players, fans, and the league office

### Van Wagner Sports & Entertainment (VWSE Productions)

Director, Business Development – New York, NY

**March 2016 – October 2017**

- Developed a strong professional network and utilized that network to bring in new business. Built new leads and leveraged existing relationships with key sports brands, teams, leagues, and agencies
- Increased the scope of VWSE Productions services within college athletics. Signed new high-profile collegiate accounts through strategic marketing efforts, market analysis, and competitor analysis
- Executed the largest brand deal in the history of VWSE Productions with Under Armour to produce stadium and arena graphics globally
- Generated the first-ever NBA team deal within the VWSE Productions division
- Developed strategic partnerships to close complex deals through negotiations, meetings, pricing proposals and working with executive producers to provide the best solutions for pro and college clients

## **Big Ten Conference**

Director, Branding – New York, NY

**April 2014 – March 2016**

- Appointed by Big Ten Commissioner Delany to launch the Big Ten NYC office and build the conference's presence on the east coast through brand messaging, event activation, marketing initiatives, and managing key partnerships with Madison Square Garden and the New York Yankees
- Analyzed and developed brand plan for each academic year. Highlights include the east coast push with the "Big Ten Maps" PSA and events in the eastern corridor, launch of Big Ten hockey with the "Hockey Smile" campaign, and adding Big Ten lacrosse while amplifying the Maryland vs. Johns Hopkins rivalry
- Managed creative agency and PR agency to execute brand programming and creative assets to deliver through numerous outlets including TV, print, digital and live events on campus and neutral sites
- Managed day to day relationships with school marketing, licensing, and equipment contacts
- Managed relationships with TV partners (ESPN, ABC, CBS, FOX, BTN) on all Big Ten branding initiatives and PSA programming. Point of contact for brand and marketing initiatives related to TV networks
- Oversaw game production for all Big Ten marquee events including the Big Ten Football Championship Game, Basketball Tournaments and Hockey Tournament. Led staff in this area to enhance overall game experience

Associate Director, Branding – Rosemont, IL

**July 2011 - March 2014**

- Managed the daily aspects and execution of the conference's marketing initiatives
- Redesigned brand style guide incorporating a new logo, new schools and brand guidelines for uniforms & fields
- Spearheaded rollout of new brand guidelines of all Big Ten marks with school contacts, TV partners, apparel brands, and sponsors. Achieved 100% school compliance with uniform and field mandates through strategic implementation with equipment managers, apparel contacts, event & facility managers, and senior administrators on campuses

## **Game Seven Marketing**

Nike Basketball Sr. Account Manager – New York, NY

**September 2010 - July 2011**

- Managed full production and execution of Nike Basketball East events, campaigns, and initiatives within Nike's biggest category in the most populous U.S. market
- Executed pre-project, project management, activation, and post-project elements. Included ideation of concept, development of pitch deck, managing programming/run of show, vendor sourcing, budget management, running client meetings and status calls, on-site management of staff/talent/vendors, writing comprehensive recaps and budget analysis
- Oversaw several Nike Basketball big moments including the LeBron James transition to Miami and the strong Nike Basketball presence in the new market. Established new partners and built relationships for Nike and the Miami Heat within the grassroots Miami market

## **94x50 (We Win.) / DIME Magazine**

Nike Basketball Account Manager – New York, NY

**May 2009 – September 2010**

- Managed production and execution of Nike Basketball East events, most notably the 2010 World Basketball Festival at the famous NYC Rucker Park
- Project management of additional events included Converse, Red Bull, Nike Running and Nike Retail

## **The Gazelle Group**

Sponsorship Coordinator – Princeton, NJ

**May 2006 - May 2009**

- Assisted in the implementation of high-profile collegiate basketball events. Responsibilities included managing sponsorship relations and executing contract benefits
- Executed over 50 high profile sponsorship contracts. Managed day to day contact with sponsors. Oversaw in-game promotional activities, game scripts, post event recaps and VIP hospitality for all events

## **Philadelphia Eagles**

Marketing Intern – Philadelphia, PA

**July 2005 - January 2006**

Assisted the Philadelphia Eagles marketing staff during Training Camp and the 2005 NFL season with all marketing initiatives.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:**

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hudson County, Triboro Youth Track Club, South Jersey Tennis Association Youth Camps

## **EDUCATION:**

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**Lehigh University**, Bethlehem, PA.

College of Business and Economics: Bachelor of Science in Marketing, 2006

## **USA Fencing Event Site Selection Inclusion Policy**

### **Revised December 14, 2024**

#### **Background**

In October 2022, USA Fencing committed to protecting its' LGBTQIA+ individuals and show support for its' women members by giving preference to selecting venues within states that had more inclusive laws.

Original: <https://www.usafencing.org/news/2022/november/03/usa-fencing-to-give-preference-to-states-with-more-inclusive-laws-when-selecting-future-host-cities-for-national-tournaments>

#### **Changes**

This updated policy serves to take that same commitment to the city level, allowing USA Fencing a more granular opportunity to look at opportunities to work with cities who are in turn willing to offer the same protections that are available in states with more inclusive laws.

#### **Policy**

USA Fencing includes a wide variety of factors in its' site selection process for national events including but limited to:

- Square footage requirements.
- City interest and availability in hosting.
- Costs to USA Fencing and USA Fencing families.
- Accessibility .
- Geographic diversity across national tournaments.

USA Fencing will give preference to sites within states that have High, Medium and Fair tally's awarded by LGBTMAP.org and avoid where possible states that have a Negative Overall Policy Tally, or "red".

USA Fencing will also give preference to sites within states that do not have laws that endanger the health of members, or immediate family of members, and will avoid those with laws that may see a medical professional prosecuted for assisting a member in need of critical medical care, or reproductive-related medical care, using The Commonwealth Fund as its' source of information on this subject; once again avoiding where possible states with the bottom ranking policy ranking.

## **Exception**

USA Fencing will provide an exception to sites that might otherwise be excluded by this policy where city officials provide a written undertaking and plan of action assuring the protection, welfare and support of LGBTQIA+ members (for example, providing All-Gender or Gender-Neutral restroom options) of the USA Fencing community, protection of the rights of Women, the rights of any other affected member group while attending such an event, and the protection of medical professionals coming to the aid of any individual needing medical attention and/or reproductive-related care.

In considering such an exception, USA Fencing must account for the overall actions of a city in relation to its own LGBTQIA+ and female residents, to the best of its ability and, working in tandem with the city, provide support resources to affected members of the USA Fencing community.

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