



MEETING MINUTES
USA National Karate-do Federation Board of Directors Meeting
March 25, 2024, 9 am Central time, Omni Hotel Fort Worth, TX

Board Members in Attendance

Elisa Au
Mike Donadio
Sasha Gerritson
Pat Hickey
Brian Hilliard
Angel Johnson
Todd Meyers
Brian Ramrup
Tom Scott
Senthil Thiyagarajan

Staff

Michael Cain
Brody Burns
Sara Plackett

Others

Various members of USA-NKF via Zoom

Call to Order – Elisa Au called the meeting to order at 9:01 am Central Time (CT).

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

1. Pat Hickey declared a conflict since he is the Chair of the USA Karate Federation, which could be considered a competing organization to USANKF. Mr. Hickey stated that the USA Karate Federation has no interest in becoming the National Governing Body (NGB) for Karate in the US.

Open Session

2. Minutes from January 24, 2024 – Motion to approve by Mike Donadio, seconded by Angel Johnson.
 - a. Votes in favor = 9; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 0
3. Financial Report – Michael Cain
 - a. Michael Cain sent financials regarding the income for Jan-Feb 2024.
 - b. Financials are positive, and that includes all closed-out expenses (team trials, camps)
 - c. Michael Cain would like to send a better snapshot of profit/loss every other month.
 - d. There was a discussion about having Bestow come to 2 board meetings in person or via Zoom.
 - e. Sasha Gerritson asked to see an income statement after each event
 - f. Elisa Au asked for financial reports for 2023 in total
 - g. Brian Ramrup voiced concern about any additional expenses with accounting services. Michael Cain believes CFO services are included in the current SOW.
4. Board and International Updates given by Elisa Au
 - a. 1 Sr. World Championship Bronze medal & 5 Pan American Games Medals
 - b. 2023-2024 Sr. and Jr. Team Goals with Coaching Staff
 - c. 1 Series A medal, 2 Youth League medals, 1 Premier League Medal



- i. Michael Cain stated we are sending a coach to every WKF event
 - d. 2024 USA Sr. National Team Selected
 - i. Michael Cain would like to book Team Trials 2025 and, hopefully, 2026 back at the training center in Colorado. We need to go over a 1 or 2-day event for Team Trials. If possible, Sasha Gerritson would like to see Team Trials over a holiday weekend.
 - e. MOU with Egypt
 - i. Egypt's National Team participation in the US Open directly resulted from the signed MOU, resulting in a benefit for our athletes.
 - f. New Committee Members
 - i. Shannon Nishi, Jordan Fox, Caren Lesser
 - g. The Ethics Committee is tasked with conducting Code of Conduct training for all Board/Staff/Coaches/Referees/National Team Athletes, which must be completed for the USOPC.
 - h. Meeting with WKF President Antonio Espinos
 - i. Reports USA has a good working relationship with WKF
 - ii. WKF eagerness for USA to host a WKF event, discussion on advantages and disadvantages of hosting an event for 2026
 - iii. Increasing viewership online CESI sports
 - i. Meeting with Sarah Hirshland (USOPC) - she is pleased with how things are going at our NGB
 - j. 2025 Selection Process for Sr. Individual
 - i. Task the Selection Committee to assemble a work to examine the selection process. Questions on who would be in the working group. Tom Scott agrees to be in the group. Ask John LaTona if he can look at the working group
 - k. 30th anniversary of USA-NKF
 - i. Task force to celebrate at 2024 Nationals, invite past members that had an impact on USA Karate
 - ii. Sasha Gerritson will spearhead that task force, along with Caren Lesser and Jay Farrell, who volunteered to help. We will hold Zoom meetings for anyone who wants to be involved.
 - iii. Brian Ramrup would like to see if we can get past members to help athletes through donor engagement.
- 5. CEO and Organizational Updates by Michael Cain
 - a. Financials covered earlier
 - b. US Sports Alliance
 - i. NGB Digital online network
 - c. 4th Signature event 2025 over Labor Day weekend combines events with USA Boxing, USA Judo, USA Karate and USA Fencing
 - d. 3rd Signature event All American Event Oct. 25-27th, West Virginia
 - i. Senthil Thiyagarajan asked what the primary goal of the event was. Michael Cain stated that it goes along with sanctioning events, profit, and sponsorship. Brody Burns – responds about All American with the need for more high-level events in the USA and helps junior development
 - e. Coaching Structure with Brody Burns (shares his presentation)
 - i. Regional Breakdown (6 regions)
 - ii. Sports performance program, youth developmental program, kata, kumite and para programs
 - iii. Selection process and requirements for national coaches
 - iv. Feature for the coaching programs

1. Senthil Thiyagarajan asked if there would be a kobudo component to the program. Brody Burns would like to focus on WKF events at this time. There might be an opportunity to expand the program.
 2. Elisa Au asked Michael Cain/Brody Burns to discuss if coaches are paid contractors, including a discussion on coaches' contracts and their expectations.
 3. Pat Hickey expressed concern about coaches' contracts and how they were written. Legal experts should examine the contracts to ensure both sides are protected.
 4. Discussions on evaluations and reviewing coaching quarterly, program development, formal review, and goals.
- f. Team World Championships - Brody Burns
- i. Team Kumite Selection process and discussion
6. Any questions from board members and participants before the break
- a. Cheryl Murphy clarified that once the team qualifies, the names on the team can change. Regarding national trainers, will there be an announcement that a position is open, as well as the job description and interview process? Positions are always open; reach out to the lead coach of that region or national office—emails with requirements and interviews set.
 - b. Put the process to become a coach/trainer on the website

BREAK

7. Fundraising Update – Sasha Gerritson
 - a. The matching grant was very successful, taking donor engagement to the next level.
8. Sponsorship Update – Michael Cain
 - a. Negotiation with a few sponsors
 - b. Century Punok
 - c. Looking at cities as sponsorship partners
 - d. Discussion on partnering with Open Circuit
9. Review Strategic Plan – Elisa Au (Shares presentation)
 - a. Pat Hickey asks if anyone has studied what it costs an athlete to compete locally, nationally, or internationally. Tom Scott – stated that full participation as an elite athlete is around \$10,000.
 - b. Brian Ramrup asked about more media presence of our sport and athletes. Increase visibility, tell athletes' stories, and acknowledge athletes doing their best. Elisa Au asked the Board if our branding and marketing strategy is a priority to our organization and agreed that it is. Other points that came up include:
 - i. How to do this in a cost-effective way
 - ii. Use the regional structure
 - iii. Increase visibility on social media platforms
 - iv. Look into certain agencies to help with a branding and marketing strategy and what that would cost
 - c. Sasha Gerritson to look into sponsorship fundraising
 - i. All-American Championship to tie it in
 - ii. Financial support for athletes going to Jr. PKF and Jr. Worlds
 - d. Athletic Excellence
 - i. Athletes are asking for more kata training
 - ii. Only 2 Kata coaches at the moment
 - e. Discussion on the number of referees
 - i. Increase jr. referees
 - ii. Keeping athletes involved when they retire from competition



- f. Membership breakdown for athletes, coaches, and referees. New membership types adding and athlete/coach membership
- 10. Committees – The board decided to move this topic to a closed session
- 11. Dan Ranking and Masters Caucus
 - a. Should Dan Ranking be a committee or done by Masters Caucus
 - b. The Board discussed the purpose of having a Dan certification.
 - c. The NF President should sign operational task force certificates per WKF standards.
 - d. Two types of Dan ranking: one for people who want to move up internationally (referees and coaches) and the other for a student-recognized Dan ranking with the federation
 - e. Action Items for the Masters’ Caucus
 - i. Task them for procedures on Dan ranking
 - ii. Goal for Dan ranking: revenue, international licensing, quality control, membership
 - iii. Engage Katsutaka Tanaka in this
- 12. Any questions to the membership
 - a. Cheryl Murphy – Is the federation addressing wearing religious garb during competition? Michael Cain – I can’t discuss specific issues, but we are addressing them.
 - b. Caren Lesser stated that she has knowledge of the prior technical committee and Dan certification so she can help with any questions.

Lunch Break

- 13. Bylaw Review and Discussion
 - a. Send to Steven Hess to clean it up
 - b. Discuss policies, procedures, changes, what needs to be in the bylaws, and what should be a policy.
 - c. Motion to move forward with the review process, AAC present their charter and add back in section 16, Mike Donadio seconds motion – Votes in favor = 7; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 2

The Open Session of the meeting ends.

Closed Session

- 1. Updates on current complaints – Michael Cain
- 2. Requested Board audience – John LaTona
- 3. Committee member positions
 - a. Vote to approve new Coach Committee – Hiroshi Allen (chair), Christina Muccini, Miguel Ochoa – Votes in favor = 9; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 0
 - b. Vote to approve new Technical Committee – Cleve Baxter (chair), Jesus Costa, Ray Hughes, George Kotaka (pending his acceptance) - Votes in favor = 9; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 0
 - c. Vote to remove Cleve Baxter from the Referee Committee and add Cedric Barksdale - Votes in favor = 9; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 0
 - d. Vote to add Mike Donadio to the Audit Committee - Votes in favor = 8; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 1
- 4. Current Board members with <4-year terms
 - a. At-large elected position – Vote to extend this position (held by Senthil Thiyagarajan) to end in 2026 due to the organization’s delay in running the election that should have sat this position by January 2022. Instead, the position was finally seated in early 2023, making the term less than 2 years.
 - b. Votes in favor = 8; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 1

Executive Session



1. The Board agreed to reserve time in the Executive session to discuss staff.
2. Elisa Au motioned to adjourn, seconded by Michael Donadio.
3. Motion approved: Votes in favor = 5; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 0

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:30 pm CT.