



USLA Board Meeting Minutes

Saturday, October 14, 2023

Mt. Van Hoevenberg

Members Present: Erin Warren, Nonie Manion, Bob Hughes, Bruce Norman, Don Simkin, Scott McIntyre, Ken Yonemura, Summer Britcher, Tucker West, Chris Mazdzer

Staff Present: Jim Leahy, Mr. Grimmette, Mr. Sheer, Lucy Beaulieu, Amy Chapin

Call To Order- E. Warren

The meeting was called to order at 9:12AM. Ms. Warren thanked everyone for traveling to Lake Placid for the meeting, adding that it's a great time of the year to be here. There are many exciting things going on in the office as athletes and coaches have a point of opportunity for the season. We have a great deal of content to cover today, and the goal is to have good discussions.

Ms. Warren notified the Board that she will be stepping down from the Board effective end of June as she is busy with professional commitments. She will be happy to serve in a committee capacity. Mr. Leahy added here that he will also be retiring at the end of June. It has been a great 10 years, and he has loved his position but believes that the time for retiring is now. The timing will be the same as Ms. Warren. Mr. Leahy said that to create consistency he would hope to transition to a Board position through 2026. He would like to stay engaged with what is going on through 26 and beyond. Ms. Warren said that we will discuss a succession plan later in this meeting for both she and Mr. Leahy.

Ms. Warren also announced that current Independent Board member Mr. Adam Berlew has resigned from the Board. He has taken a new position that will require an enormous amount of his time and energy. She praised his 10 year work on the Board and truly valued the business acumen he brought to the association.

Approval of the August 30, 2023 Board meeting minutes

The first order of business is the Approval of the minutes from the August 30, 2024 meeting.

Motion to Approve Minutes of August 30, 2024 by Mr. Hughes, second by Mr. Mazdzer.
Motion passed unanimously.

Procedural Matter via Sept. 8, 2022 Approved Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. Leahy addressed the Board with a procedural matter of business required via our current USOPC audit. This USOPC requires that our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan already addressed in previous Board meeting be formally approved by the Board of Directors and its approval noted in the minutes. As previously discussed, our strategic plan is different from the HPP and only needs to be created and approved on a quadrennial basis. The next strategic plan will be after the 2026 games. The plan is fluid and will require updates and discussion through the 2026 Olympic Games.

Motion to approve the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan by Mr. Mazdzer second by Mr. Simkin. Motion passed unanimously

Mr. Norman made a Motion to the Board of Directors to thank both Mr. Leahy and Ms. Warren for their service and to accept their plan to leave with the appreciation of the Board of Directors, second by Mr. McIntyre. This motion passed.

Strategic Planning - J. Leahy, C. Mazdzer

- **Succession**

Mr. Leahy will employ a search firm and will reach out to the USOPC to have support in the form of a financial grant to help defray the expense. Mr. Leahy will contact the company that was used when he was hired, also discussing the timeline for when the process will begin, which is likely to be after the New Year. We will also need to populate a committee for this. This is a critical role and we believe that the USOPC will assist. The Board will need to address many items moving forward with this role. There was discussion on particulars of the CEO position. It will likely cost more to replace Mr. Leahy than his current salary. Ms. Warren suggested we do some benchmarking as it relates to the salary for this position and other positions in the organization.

After a discussion the Board agreed the search committee will be comprised of Mr. McIntyre, Mr. Simkin, Mr. Mazdzer, Ms. Warren, and Mr. Leahy.

There was additional discussion on other staff positions and their potential timeline for retirement and the cost of replacing them.

- **Governance / USOPC Audit & Compliance**

Mr. Leahy explained that we are now spending a great deal of time on compliance. Ms. Chapin is spending one third of her time on compliance. The addition of the Sport:80 platform should save duplication of work by linking multiple audit programs.

One of our current issues is that we need to populate our committees. We have some committees that have not really been operating since Covid. There was list of committees handed out showing the last members.

It was asked if we need all these committees. Mr. Leahy stated that Standing committees are required, and others are suggested. Standing committees require 33.3% athlete representation. Various committees were discussed. Mr. Leahy would like to populate all committees and be in full compliance prior to departing.

We will also need to have a slate of candidates for any open Board positions ready for the a Members vote at next year's Annual Meeting.

The USOPC will likely be able to assist with the population of these committees as it relates to independent members. The Board members were asked to give thoughts on potential candidates for these committees. Ms. Warren offered to assist with this. It was suggested to prioritize the Nominating & Governing Committee and the National Team Committees. Mr. West and Mr. Yonemura agreed to assist.

It was noted that although compliance can be cumbersome and time-consuming it is here to stay, and we need to find ways to work through it.

Mr. Mazdzer added regarding governance that we have not had an annual meeting in several years.

After a discussion of getting back to pre-Covid operating procedures, the Board decided to set the date for next year's Annual Meeting for September 14, 2024.

Motion to Approve the date for the Annual Meeting for September 14, 2024 by Mr. Hughes, second by Mr. Simkin. PASSED

- **Revision of Bylaws**

Mr. Leahy reported that once we complete our current USOPC audit and receive recommendations we will work with Ed Williams to revise our current bylaws. The USOPC will assist with this in the way of a \$10K grant. We had our last meeting with the Audit group last week. There was discussion on the requirements that we have had to provide for the audit group.

We may need to address the transition of the President /CEO from the end of June to the meeting in September. Ms. Warren stated that she could extend her term until that time to make it easier.

- **Internal Athlete Advisory Committee/Council**

We do have this Committee in place under our current bylaws. It was suggested that we expand on that Article in the Bylaws rather than completely rewrite that section. Mr. West, as the Internal Athlete representative, stated that he will work on filling the Committee and determining how this Council will operate. Mr. Mazdzer explained the importance of this internal council so that athletes have the opportunity to bring their

concerns to USA Luge. This will ensure the athletes input and establish a well-defined and collaborative working relationship with USA luge.

There was further discussion on this issue and the importance of representing all athletes, including all development teams and those athletes that fall outside the ten-year rule. This will help with the engagement of all athletes and hopefully create a situation where athletes stay engaged in luge once they are retired.

- **Quad Plan Update**

An update on the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan was presented by Ms. Warren. Focusing on 3 areas:

1. Athlete Pipeline Development – overall of results
2. Technology – addition of Bruce Norman and making good progress forward. Benefits of bringing Toni Eggert on board as a new coach/sled technician
3. Staff Structure – commitment of staff to operate with more efficiency.

There was originally discussion in separating High Performance from Development but financially that isn't something we can do financially at this time.

As a Board we need to continue to work on increasing funding sources since we know our funding from the USOPC will remain flat through 2028.

Ms. Warren presented an expense breakdown from the past season, stating that 55% of our budget is spent on National teams. Other expenses were explained and discussed including:

- Athlete funding across other NGB's and the unique nature of our venue driven sport
- The necessity to get experience on all tracks on the circuit
- Recruitment and Cross Recruitment
- Administrative costs compared to other NGB's – overall we are underpaying at all levels
- Tech Funding – We have done a good job at getting USOPC funding and VIK funding Better utilization of outside sponsors and VIK toward technology funding

Overall, we have made strides and exciting things are happening. There were further questions and discussion on finding revenue streams.

Financial Update – J. Leahy

The sustainability of our current business model was discussed at length. We continue to be revenue challenged while the cost of doing business continues to escalate drastically.

Revenue from the USOPC will be flat for the next several years. The size of our teams at the SNT and JNT level rival the best teams in our sport. The need to hire quality coaches and pay wages higher than we have paid in the past. The cost of providing sleds and other equipment to give our athletes the best opportunity to compete. Enhancing our mission by bringing World Cups to US soil and all that comes with such a venture. Maintaining a back of house staff that is necessary to operate the organization and is compensated accordingly. All these expenses over the last two years outweigh what we have brought in revenue. These losses can't continue at our current level. Something has to give.

Mr. Leahy continued that moving forward we will need a collective process...Board, Staff & Athletes in working towards a business model that will keep the Association solvent for decades to come.

We are a business, and we need to operate within our means. It's not about whether programs are good or bad but sometimes it's about what we can afford.

There was discussion on this year's budget numbers. There was also a question about selling old equipment as a revenue stream. Mr. Grimmette explained that we pass equipment down and we don't have excess equipment that we could sell. He continued that we are building a lot of equipment now but won't have excess for several years. Ms. Britcher asked if there is an inventory list where we can value and possibly sell items. Mr. Grimmette replied that we are working on an inventory ID process, but it is difficult to keep up with.

There was also discussion on the Jr. Team budgets for the season, and the possibly places to save.

Further discussion took place on USLA Foundation, LA2028 and the overall health of the Olympic movement and future games.

2023-2024 Season Outlook- M. Grimmette, B. Norman

Mr. Grimmette began by stating that much of this has been touched upon already. As an organization that focuses on Olympic medals, we also need to be a learning organization. Technologically we are moving forward. The addition of Mr. Toni Eggert has brought not only in influx of knowledge but also enthusiasm, which has been fun to watch. The steel friction group has been working hard and it's exciting.

Wolf pack – Mr. Norman gave an update on the latest revisions to the Wolf pack project which is an information gathering pack that will be inserted to sleds. The first 25 developed will go to the National and Jr. National team sleds and then another 25 for the C team. This program represents a \$400,000 investment which is being provided to us via in-kind participation. Data collected by the wolf pack is relayed to a central hub and then uploads to a server and then makes the data available. We are in the middle of the

process. Year 1 was development and now Year 2 is deployment and Year 3 will be analytics. Mr. Leahy thanked Mr. Norman for his work and passion for this project.

Mr. Leahy stated that Mr. Grimmette is spending a great deal of time on our technical projects and emphasized that we need to make sure all coaches can utilize these projects. Mr. Grimmette gave an update on the current technology programs. He also gave an update on our sled preparation for the season as well giving an overview of the coaching and sports staff.

Club Report – K. Yonemura, D. Simkin

ADK Luge Club

Mr. Simkin reported that the cooperation between staff and club has resulted in increased track time for the upcoming season. Mr. Grimmette added that a big positive that resulted from discussions with ORDA is that except for Christmas and Presidents week they are moving away from passenger rides. Also adding here that Ashley Walden is now the ORDA CEO and that is great for luge.

Wasatch Luge Club

Mr. Yonemura began by saying that today an officials course is being held in Park City and 7 people are attending.

There was a short discussion on luge officials and whether we have the right number of officials moving forward.

Athlete Report – C. Mazdzer, S. Britcher, T. West

Mr. West began stating that overall, there is a very positive feeling amongst the athletes. They have all had a chance to work with Mr. Eggert and everyone is excited. There was concern about losing Mr. Hillebrand and his targeted start technique but it does seem like performance is steady. The start of the on ice season has been pushed back in lieu of additional equipment preparation and overall this is a good choice.

Mr. West continued that the Athletes have sat down with Mr. Sheer and Mr. Grimmette on the Athlete Agreement requesting more space for individual sponsor locations on their jacket, hat and sled. Mr. Mazdzer added that there is an allowance for logos, the division of funding and navigating social media in the marketing agreement. The only roadblock is currently staying away from competing sponsors.

Ms. Warren stated that personal sponsorship is a relatively new thing for us as in the past athletes haven't had much to offer. There was continued discussion on this area and the suggestion by Mr. McIntyre of possibly of putting together a tool kit for the athletes may be helpful.

There was discussion on various ways that athletes could leverage personal sponsorship. Our athletes are successful engaging with sponsors but collectively don't have the skills to close a deal on personal sponsorship.

Mr. Mazdzer stated that another main focus of the AAC has been exacting what the definition of "athlete" is and what that identification means. Luge does have a definition of this.

FIL/ORDA

Mr. Leahy reiterated we have the World Cup in Lake Placid December 8-9 and because we have an international training week, we will also host an international start competition at our headquarters on December 1. We are currently working through the policies for participation and the prize money that will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place finishers.

FIL Congress - We have received an international grant from the USOPC to co-host the FIL Congress in Lake Placid with our partners at ORDA. ORDA will officially place the bid in to host the FIL and IBSF Congress so these events can be held back to back.

We have a gentleman's agreement with the FIL to host World Championships in Lake Placid in 2028. We will need to submit an application for a vote in June of 2024.

Motion to Adjourn at 3:15 by Ms. Britcher second by Mr. Hughes. Approved.