



MEETING MINUTES
USA National Karate-do Federation Board of Directors Meeting
October 13, 2023, 3pm Central time, via Zoom

Board Members in Attendance

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

Staff

Michael Cain
John Dusliere

Various USA-NKF members

Call to Order – Elisa Au called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm Cent Time (ET).

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

- Michael Cain declared that he has a former friendship and had a previous business partnership with Todd Meyers.
- Brian Ramrup declared that he is friends with Tom Scott.

Open Session

1. Board and Organization Update by Elisa Au
 - a. Update on LA28 – Karate did not make the selection as an additional sport for LA.
 - b. 1355 athletes at the 2023 National Championships
 - c. 2 National Training Camps
 - d. Selection Committee approved – John LaTona, Chris Hodgins, Clay Morton (athlete rep)
 - e. International Relations in progress
2. USOPC – Outstanding Compliance Items Update
 - a. COI, Anti-Retaliation training
 - b. Board & Management DEI training
 - c. Code of Conduct training
3. Committee
 - a. Elisa Au presented the criteria for consideration for the Referee and JEDI committees.
 - b. Ms. Au presented the nomination list (previously provided to the Board) and asked if the Board was ready to vote or if there was a request for discussion.
 - c. Tom Scott asked for clarification on the pre-reads regarding a list of recommended candidates from the Referee Committee Chair and the list nominated by Ms. Au. Ms. Au clarified that the recommendations were considered and that her nominations were a list of people she is presenting for approval.
 - d. Pat Hickey motioned to approve both the Referee Committee and JEDI Committee nominees.
 - e. Sasha Gerritson asked for more clarification on Ms. Au's process for selecting the nominees. Ms. Au said that she respected the Referee Committee Chair's recommendations with high regard and also took into account the experience and knowledge of the pool of candidates. She also mentioned that geography was a consideration.

Updated 11/30/23

- f. Senthil asked if Referee Committee Task Force members would also be addressed. Pat Hickey responded that it would be the responsibility of the Referee Committee to assign those task force members with the approval of the CEO.
 - g. Ms. Gerritson and Brian Ramrup asked that we move the topic to a Closed session for further discussion.
 - h. The motion was not seconded. The discussion will move to a Closed session.
4. Subcommittee Updates
- a. Fundraising – Sasha Gerritson announced that she secured an anonymous \$25,000 donation to be used as a matching grant through the end of 2023. She also mentioned that the non-profit she manages with Coach Jeff Kohn raised funds (approximately \$5000) to send the three para-karate athletes to the Senior World Championships. She will also visit Colorado Springs to meet with the USOPF regarding their Ambassador Program.
 - b. Sponsorship – Tom Scott did not have any updates on sponsorship.
5. CEO Update by Michael Cain
- a. USA Karate signed an MoU with USA Boxing, USA Judo, USA Fencing, USA Wrestling and possibly USA Weightlifting to partner with Aggregate Sports. They work on finding sponsorships for the NGBs. The first opportunity is an event-based grant through the end of March 2024.
 - b. USA Karate updates – training camps, Jr. PKF Champions, World Combat Games qualifiers, Youth League Mexico, PAG qualifiers.
 - c. There are two ongoing investigations with outside counsel. Brian Ramrup thanked Mr. Cain for not having a knee-jerk reaction to the situations.
 - d. Financials are stable. Mr. Cain said we are trending to end the year with a \$120,000 net profit.
 - e. Mr. Cain said we are finalizing a deal with the U.S. Performance Center in Charlotte, NC. \$300,000 (not unrestrictive) + incentives are on the table. In return, we would need to finalize a third Signature Event in 2024 in Charlotte.
 - f. Mr. Cain explained why we moved from Las Vegas to Fort Worth. The economics made sense for USA-NKF to make the move.
 - g. Pat Hickey asked if the Board will receive financial reports and a budget by the end of 2023. Mr. Cain said this would be provided by the end of the year.
 - h. Event Sanctioning
 - i. Mr. Cain talked about plans for future tournament sanctioning. He would like to roll out sanctioning by Jan 1, 2024. He asked that we move this topic to a closed session.
 - ii. Ms. Au asked that we first ask the Board and members to ask questions and weigh in first, then move it to a Closed session.
 - iii. Ms. Gerritson asked Mr. Cain to expand on his ideas. He said that we would have tiers of membership to accommodate our members.
 - iv. Mr. Ramrup asked what the climate of SafeSport is regarding sanctioning requirements. Mr. Cain said that SafeSport wants to work with us to provide sanctioning for USA Karate.
 - v. Ms. Elisa asked when this could realistically roll out without a plan presented at the moment. Mr. Cain said that a beta test in Q1 with a future official program later in the year would be realistic, but he does not want to promise a date.
 - vi. Pat Hickey asked what added costs are involved compared to the cost associated with our process in previous sanctioning processes.
 - vii. Mr. Hickey asked if there is a priority to recruit member clubs. Mr. Cain said this is less of a priority due to the complexity of a club receiving member status due to SafeSport requirements.
 - viii. David Rosenberg suggested that event sanctioning should include access to USA-NKF referees.



- ix. Tony Mendoca said that so far, he did not see a value in the sanctioning as presented. He agrees with Mr. Rosenberg that providing referees as part of the sanctioning would solve a big problem that many tournament directors have.
 - x. Mr. Hickey asked Mr. Mendoca if insurance would add value to sanctioning. Mr. Mendonca said no, insurance is relatively easy to get.
 - xi. Brody Burns said that he was in favor of a strong sanctioning program.
 - xii. Mr. Au asked Mr. Cain what are the following action items. Mr. Cain said he would solicit a survey to stakeholders to better understand the needs of tournament directors in the U.S.
 - xiii. John Dussliere added that sanctioning allows USA-NKF to implement a ranking system, which would be a value-add.
6. High-Performance Plan – John Dussliere
- a. Membership Growth – we need this to service all other parts of the plan.
 - b. BHM Management Platform Project
 - c. Member Education and Certification
 - d. High-Performance Support
 - i. Camps – tournament prep, team building, readiness/accountability, international camps
 - ii. Travel
 - iii. Coaching Pool – expand from 5-7 to 15-20, formally invite those identified as qualified to apply.
 - iv. National Team Selection
 - v. Expansion of Athlete Services – coaches supporting athletes at events, direct athlete support, indirect athlete support
 - vi. National Junior Team Selection – Analyze present depth; include in the US ranking system
 - e. Elisa Au thanked Mr. Dussliere for addressing direct athlete support. She also asked Mr. Dussliere if the broadened National Coaching pool will have a proposed structure. He said that we are trying to figure that out now based on the needs of the sport of karate.
 - f. Michael Cain stated that none of this was a referendum on the current coaching staff. This plan will improve upon the system that is already in place.
 - g. Miguel Ochoa suggested we can improve by using the auxiliary coaches more in camps and during events. He was cut off due to technical issues, but Mr. Dussliere agreed with his points and added that we need more coaches to help the current head coaches implement their plans.
7. 2024 USA-NKF Calendar
- a. Michael Cain proposed having a third Signature Event, the All American, in Q4 of 2024.
 - i. Ideas to qualify
 - 1. Must attend JIC and Nationals
 - 2. Ranking system
 - ii. Brian Ramrup said that a more solidified plan would be presented soon.
 - iii. Sasha Gerritson added that the idea of academic scholarships is infinitely fundraisable.
 - iv. The proposed third Signature Event should avoid Oct 9-13 (WC) and Dec 5-8 (YL) and holidays
 - b. Feb 2-4 – Sr Team Trials – Mr. Cain does not want to decide on the format.
 - i. Will Gatch said that the AAC is typically involved with the Head Coach, Head Referee, Tournament Director and CEO in this decision. He also said that we need our best referees for this event.
 - ii. Brian Ramrup said that with double elimination, there is no delay to the event. It would add 8 bouts at most.



- iii. Brian Hillard said a point-based selection system would be better than the current one.
 - iv. Pat Hickey added that the athlete's voice is vital in this process, and that the CEO should be able to approve the process, but ultimately, the decision lies with the Board.
 - c. 2024 USA Open
 - i. Ms. Au asked Michael Cain if he needed support marketing and promoting the 2024 JIC & USA Open. He said yes. A working group would help.
 - ii. Ms. Au asked if anyone would be willing to help. There were no immediate volunteers.
 - iii. Eric Rossini stated that locally, he made the USA Open mandatory for his members to participate in the Nationals, and that was met with little resistance because they saw the purpose in this requirement.
 - d. 2024-25 International Events hosted by USA Karate
 - i. NA Cup for Teams + training (CAN, MEX, USA, Int'l) – in conjunction with the 2024 USA Open – Mr. Au thought this would be a big boost for the USA Open and our team development.
 - 1. Mr. Ramrup liked the idea as long as it didn't negatively affect our finances.
 - 2. Mr. Cain said that we could host this event if it is cost-neutral.
 - 3. Mr. Hickey brought up the idea of reciprocity – hosting other countries will have a future ROI.
 - ii. NA Beach Cup Seniors Ind & Team – Elisa Au suggested we table this idea for 2025+
 - iii. Potential Youth League
 - 1. Ms. Au asked for thoughts on the idea of hosting a Youth League in Orlando in 2025+
 - 2. Mr. Scott supported the idea of a Youth League.
 - 3. Mr. Cain said he and Mr. Meyers will contact the Orlando Sports Commission.
 - e. 2025 Selection Process for Sr Team
 - i. Ms. Au stressed that this process needs to be solidified as soon as possible.
 - ii. Mr. Scott suggested expanding the team Kumite to all team pool athletes.
 - iii. Mr. Ramrup suggested we open the Team Kata category at the Sr Team Trials in 2024 to select a team.
 - iv. Mr. Gatch agreed with Mr. Ramrup's suggestion for 2024 and 2025+ to follow similar selection procedures as Sr Individual Kata.
 - v. Ms. Au said that even though she asked for input from the Technical Committee, Athletes Commission and Head Kata Coach back in July 2023 regarding these team Selection Procedures, she did not receive anything of substance until 10/23/23 with the suggestions of Head Coach Javier Mantilla. She instructed the AAC and Technical Committee to meet as committees and submit recommendations by 11/30/23.
8. Elisa Au motioned to move into Closed Session, seconded by Pat Hickey. Motion approved
- a. Motion approved: Votes in favor = 2; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 4
 - b. 3 Board members dropped from the meeting during the Open session.

Closed Session

9. The Board had a healthy discussion on the Referee Committee nominees.

Elisa Au motioned to move to adjourn, 2nd by Pat Hickey
Motion approved: Votes in favor = 6; Opposed = 0; Abstained = 0



Previously approved items since the 7/12/23 meeting

- 7/30/23 – Selection Committee members: John LaTona, Chris Hodgins, Clay Morton (8 yes, 0 no, 1 abstain)
- 9/7/23 – Referee Committee chair: Fariba Madani (5 yes, 0 no, 4 abstain)
- 9/7/23 – Bylaws (7 yes, 0 no, 2 abstain)
- 9/7/23 – 6/27/23 Minutes (6 yes, 0 no, 3 abstain)
- 9/7/23 – 7/12/23 Minutes (7 yes, 0 no, 2 abstain)
- 9/7/23 – Committees Policies & Procedures (7 yes, 0 no, 2 abstain)

