

3 APR 2022 – Meeting Minutes – Texas-Oklahoma WSO Special Meeting

Start Time: 7 pm Central Time

Duration: 1 hour

Method: Zoom

Present:

WSO representatives - Amanda Whiting (AW), Bobby Sirkis (BS), David Griffin (DG), Ray Harkness (RH), Daniel West (DW)

Athlete representatives – Jodi Vaughn (JV), Layne Palm (LP), Chris Lofland (CL)

Absent: Brittany Rucker (BR) (joins partway through)

DG opens meeting with unfinished business from March 27th meeting.

Previous Business – Formation of Working Groups

- DG proposes that the board vote to agree with the formation and definitions of ten proposed Working Groups (Competition, DEI, Finance, Youth Development, Collegiate, Masters, Technical Officials, Marketing, Records & History, and Coach Engagement & Mentorship) to facilitate the growth of weightlifting in Texas & Oklahoma as described in an email from earlier today (April 3rd).
 - BS asks that the vote be to agree to the formation of the committees but have time to review and edit the proposed definitions in order to clearly define roles and responsibilities of each group.
 - CL and RH agree that first action of each committee should be to flush out the definition of itself by members of that committee.
 - DG emphasizes that this should be done quickly as this board is up for reelection in 2 years (2023). He also prefers that the board as a whole have input into the definitions rather than only individual members on each committee. DG notes that the intent of each committee is not to have voting positions and the ability to dictate how things are done - all decisions must still be presented to the Board for agreement and/or voting as needed.
 - DG calls for a vote for the creation of the ten proposed working groups
 - In favor: DG, RH, CL, LP, BS, JV, DW, AW
 - Opposed: none
 - Absent: BR
 - Vote passes 8-0, one absent.
 - DG asks for a reasonable timeline to produce the working group definitions
 - CL suggests this be done quickly via email once initial Board member liaisons are set and known
 - DG agrees to a one week deadline and reiterates proposed committee member leads as discussed at March 27th meeting
 - Competition (BS, DG, RH), DEI (DG), Finance (CL), Youth Development (BR, DW), Collegiate (DG), Masters (JV, AW), Technical Officials (AW), Marketing (BR, LP), Records & History (JV, RH), and Coach Engagement & Mentorship (DG, CL, BR)
 - DG encourages Board members to create definitions that remain broad to start since any hyper specific focus of each group is not known at this time, and are open to reinterpretation and redefinition.

Main Business – Decision on Former LWC external accounts

- DG reviews what was discussed regarding previous LWC accounts at the end of the meeting on March 27th since LP, DW and CL were absent by that point
 - The Texas-Oklahoma WSO has been formed by the combination of the North Texas LWC, the South Texas LWC and the Oklahoma LWC. North and South Texas LWCs both had external

bank accounts when they ceased to exist at the end of 2021. (No comment made about Oklahoma's situation which was not discussed at previous meeting due to time overruns.)

- The former South Texas LWC run by DG has decided to electronically transfer all externally held funds to the nationally-held Texas-Oklahoma WSO collective account as all external funds were sourced from USAW via membership rebates, club rebates and event sanctions.
- Independently, the former North Texas LWC/Texas Weightlifting LWC Board has voted unanimously to turn over the fate of the associated 501(c)3 and the funds held within it to the majority decision of the nine member TX-OK WSO board
 - One member proposed leaving that account open for the convenience of running events to address two possible issues: 1) that a credit card is required by hotels to secure venue contracts which was not available from the National office (and thus became a charge on a personal card) and 2) concerns about delays in reimbursement from the USAW account to take care of potentially large hotel charges on a personal card.
 - DG corresponded with the USAW Director of Finance (Andrea Andrews) via email about these concerns (email to be forwarded to all Board members).
 - 1) USAW is actively working on changing credit card providers and “plan to include a WSO-specific department card to minimize larger charges that some of the former LWC volunteers have had to cover and then request reimbursement for on their own in recent years. This card will be held by the National Office and be used specifically for anything that cannot be requested in advance and must be paid for via credit card.”
 - 2) Regarding fund reimbursement from USAW – “as long as they follow our process for request and include the proper request-supporting receipts or invoices and they make their way to Alex (Alex Love) will be processed within 10 business days. The most common reason reimbursements get held up is 1) not including a receipt or 2) not including the actual request document” meaning who to reimburse is not known. The process also moves much quicker when direct deposit information is available rather than sending a paper check. Andrews also apologized for current issues with National office timeliness and cites the move to remote work creating challenges in Finance as a contributing factor.
 - Before opening the floor to further comments, DG calls on LP, DW and CL for their views on the issues as they were absent by this point in discussion at the previous meeting and have not yet been heard.
 - LP: agrees with convenience of having external account but wonders about USAW perception of this WSO board for having one.
 - DG notes that most previous LWCs did not have their own external accounts and were utilizing the central banking system provided by USAW since its creation about four years ago. Some LWCs (such as North Texas, Florida, Pacific LWC as currently known examples) did not and used their own separate non-profit accounts.
 - DG feels that the greater issue is that the membership base does not have any say over an external bank account or account held by an external entity like a non-profit. Specifically, DG has issue with the fact that while we are all elected to the WSO Board, the Texas Weightlifting LWC 501(c)3 is not a part of that, no longer answers to USAW

** BR joins the meeting **

by being outside of the WSO and that USAW has no control or say over that outside organization. DG acknowledges that USAW is likely minimally concerned with this issue (given the entirety of their larger responsibilities) and at the same time notes that it is also outside of their purview.

- CL: agrees with DG's description and feels that USAW's response adequately addresses the concerns that would necessitate maintaining an outside account. CL also notes that he is currently serving on the Texas Weightlifting LWC non-profit as Treasurer but sees no need to further add to discussion of these concerns.
 - CL notes his ethical concerns over an outside "company" holding any WSO-related funds and is in favor of the transition to be fully under USAW's financial umbrella where funds are released/used based on a majority vote of the WSO Board. He also notes that funds outside of the WSO would be outside of its power and control, and thus not subjected to use based on a WSO vote.
- DW: brings up that the Oklahoma LWC previously worked very hard to establish their own 501(c)3 but was ultimately unsuccessful. The goal of their 501(c)3 had it been established was to help fund National level athletes from OK and to fund the State Championship. As such, he does not feel having a 501(c)3 is inherently "sketchy" depending on what purpose the funds it holds serves and is used for. As a business owner/gym owner, he also appreciates the ability to be quickly reimbursed for large out-of-pocket expenses. Whether the USAW account could be used as effectively as any other outside account remains to be seen and discussed.
 - DG notes that the effectiveness and speed concerns appear to have been addressed by USAW through the proposed credit cards and direct deposit reimbursement. He also notes personal experience with being reimbursed in under 10 business days from USAW.
 - BR brings up a concern about having to pay taxes on amounts paid out by USAW due to how those payments are recorded (1099s). BR cites example of being paid out for athlete volunteers at AO Finals and subsequently having to claim that on her taxes.
 - CL suggests adding "tax" to the invoices submitted to balance that out.
 - BS clarifies the difference between getting paid out for work done (taxable) and being reimbursed for an expense occurred on behalf of another organization (not taxable).
 - CL notes that while reimbursements from USAW may be complicated, he feels that outside accounts holding and "funneling our money" are more complicated since they are not specifically held to the WSO bylaws.
 - In looking to the future, he believes that the WSO is supposed to run it all and notes that an outside account was a point of division between North and South Texas members of the Board. He also does not believe that OK should have their own separate account

should not control the existing respective State Championships. His plan in OK was to create a 501(c)3 specifically for the OK State Championship, put processes in place for how to run it and then train an eventual replacement of himself as director.

- In his view, the LWCs (and now WSO) through their Competition Committees should be (if they wanted to) the primary sponsor of each State Championship and assist via funds, volunteer labor, or promotion, etc. He believes that having local people who want to run the event, run the event helps grow the sport in the long run.
 - DG has issue with who is “entitled” to run either State Championship. If it is people with positions on outside organizations with funds raised from those events not going to directly support the WSO, then there is opportunity for personal profit by holding one of those positions and funds would not go back to help the membership base (unlike the requirements of the WSO Championship). DG asks if someone else wanted to host a “State Championship”, is there any process in place to prevent them? (answer: no)
 - BS reminds the Board that the WSO is required to run a WSO Championship only, and that that event should be its biggest focus. The State Championships are and always have been local meets with no requirement from USAW on who specifically runs them.
 - DG states that the WSO Championship is also by definition a local meet.
 - BS reiterates that the WSO is “required” by USAW to run a WSO Championship as dictated in their bylaws, unlike other local meets.
 - CL repeats his point that all events (State and WSO Championships) and the funds raised from them should be under WSO control in order to best serve the WSO membership. He is fully against separately-run individual events with the freedom to make their own choices and decisions.
 - BS notes that RH currently has a business where he was told to run a State Championship and has made the necessary personal financial investments to do that. BS feels it is not right for another entity (USAW) with no authority over the running of local events to now say that RH must give that up.
 - BS also notes that the Texas State meet has been developed over ten years from a point in time where no one wanted to be in charge of the event. The North Texas LWC has not run the event - a separate non-profit was created to run the event where the members of the non-profit board were elected by the members of USAW in North Texas. South Texas LWC was unsuccessfully approached a number of times about merging LWCs in order to give them an elected voice on that board. Regardless, each state meet (save for about 1-2 years after Steve Galvan withdrew from weightlifting) has had at least one North and South Texas representative assisting with the planning, decision making and execution of the event.
 - Bottom line, BS is against having another organization (like USAW or the WSO) step in and tell local organizers of legacy events (like Texas State) or private events (like OK State) that they can no longer run those events.
 - DG states that that is exactly what it comes down to (local organizers no longer allowed to run existing events).
 - CL does not understand the concerns raised since both BS and RH are members of the WSO competition committee and would in theory be running these events anyway. He asks if the concern is

having to share any funds raised with the WSO? Or keeping Texas/Oklahoma funds separate? Or BS/RH not having control over these events?

- BS asks CL what issues he has with the current running of the State meet and how funds are paid out to athletes from that? BS acknowledges that oversight of the 501(c)3 was not the greatest in past but that can be rectified moving forward to help address some concerns.
- DG interjects that the issue is not oversight but the fact that the WSO would not have control over the non-profit.
- CL states that any missing oversight issues could be resolved by bringing all funds into one pot with the required and agreed upon WSO procedures, and would prevent opportunities for issues down the line.
- Discussion occurs between BS, BR and CL about a hypothetical new local meet being called “South Texas State” and the WSO having no jurisdiction to take over that local event put on by a separate business even if it proves successful.
 - While DG has no issue with local meets being allowed to run as they want and that there are no official requirements as to their names, he has issue with Texas State continuing to be called “Texas State” (and profiting a private group) if it is not run by the local state governance and therefore not profiting and befitting all Texas athletes. Being called “Texas State” could easily lead to assumptions that it is a LWC/WSO event and not privately run.
 - BS interjects that the Texas State Meet has given \$70k+ directly back to Texas athletes, and thus is benefiting Texas athletes.
 - DG states that if the money is to benefit Texas athletes, that it should be given to the WSO to decide how that money would best benefit Texas athletes. While Texas State/the Texas LWCs were run one way in the past, “Texas Weightlifting” no longer exists and DG believes that we should change with the changes to fully become one TX/OK WSO which is the current reality we have to work with/in (despite DG not wanting OK to join with TX in the first place). He believes that if we are to hold events for the benefit of the WSO membership, that they should be controlled by people elected by that membership which the 501(c)3 board is not anymore.
 - CL believes the current situation is an ethical manipulation of the Texas members of USAW, based on the assumption that Texas State is run by local weightlifting governance. He also believes it is an ethical manipulation of the members serving on the WSO board to have anyone but the board say they are the host of the State Meet.
- AW disagrees with the concern raised that funds generated from the membership via the State Meet registration are not benefiting that same membership

population. She points to years of prior Texas State meet budgets showing how much the event brought in, how much was spent on the running and operation of the event and how much went to athlete payouts over the year without much leftover in terms of “extra” funds.

- DW notes that the prior year’s OK State Meet required significant investment on the part of RH to make it viable and make people excited about weightlifting in OK. Similar athlete payouts to Texas State were provided via donation by an external corporate donor to the event. DW also notes that in OK, RH IS the State Championship and has generated a lot of community support for the running of his event.
- DG states that with WSO support, neither RH nor anyone else would need to invest personal funds in the OK/TX State meets. Funds from the WSO can and should be used to support these events put on for the benefit of the membership. DG also wishes to avoid the argument of “I’m using my own money, I’m doing this myself” by instead having all three events supported by the purse of the WSO.
- DG also disagrees with the statement that South Texas was involved in the State meet planning or execution (or anything beyond helping out day of) after the departure of Steve Galavan and Suzy Sanchez, specifically during 2018-2020 as the only remaining South Texas LWC members were himself and Erika Talbot who were not given voting rights.
- BS clarifies that voting rights on the 501(c)3 board would have only been extended had the two LWC’s merged into one to allow for elected members from both North and South. The South had previously been invited to merge into one LWC for that reason (among others), but the merger never happen. So instead, input and advice from the South was continued by having one person act as spokesperson. That person was Steve Galavan until his departure from weightlifting, left empty for a few years and was filled again in 2020 by BR.
- Big picture: BS believes that there is nothing wrong with how the existing Texas and Oklahoma State meets are run, and notes that there is nothing in the WSO or USAW Bylaws that state that the WSO has to run a State Meet, only a WSO Championship. Unless and until the existing events falter, he does not see a need for them to change.
- As such, BS proposes having a vote to leave the State meets and their respective organizing structures in place as is.
 - JV asks whether the 501(c)3 assets will be turned over to the WSO as was voted on by the non-profit board.
 - BS clarifies that the non-profit board unanimously voted to turn over the decision of what to do with the 501(c)3 (including its assets) up to a majority vote of the WSO board.
 - CL has issue with four of the WSO board members also currently serving on the non-profit board (CL, BS, JV and AW), where 2 of those members (CL and JV) strongly oppose the continued existence of the non-profit

- which he believes should be taken into consideration in any WSO decision.
- JV notes issues she had with a lack of clarity into the non-profit finances (what being spent where) until just before the most current State in 2022 meet despite being on the board since January 2020. JV strongly encourages the WSO board to consider that when voting here. She would prefer a singular solution where all of the WSO can give back to the community together.
 - DG acknowledges that this group is unlikely to come together over this issue so long as the non-profit continues to exist, due to the fact that it exists outside of USAW with no direct input or say over it from USAW membership. Given that it is the WSO's purview to work for and give back to the community, he sees the non-profit efforts as redundant to that objective through overlapping or duplicated initiatives (such as funding for international athletes and event payouts).
 - AW points out that the WSO has objectives far exceeding that of the non-profit which is only focused on running the State Meet. The WSO has the responsibility now of mentoring coaches, keeping records, starting youth program initiatives, growing the overall membership, running a WSO Championship, etc. AW suggests that while keeping the State meet running as is, the revenue generated specifically for international payouts from that event be donated/funneled to the WSO to then make the payouts to athletes from those funds (as discussed at a previous WSO meeting). These funds for these initiatives are only available because the State Meet is now successful, self-supporting, and profitable without relying on funds or support from USAW. The WSO has other sources of funds (yearly rebates, the WSO Championship and the existing war chest that has been built up in the USAW accounts) to fund and develop every other initiative or program they could propose.
 - DG states that all that could be accomplished under one central bank account and he would want funds to support the entire WSO (including OK) and not just Texas.
 - BS again calls for a vote to keep the State Meets operating exactly the same as they currently are.
 - DG calls for a preceding vote over the decision of what to do with the Texas Weightlifting LWC 501(c)3 as was given to the WSO board by the board of that entity. BS clarifies – the vote is whether to keep the 501(c)3 up and operating externally or not. DG agrees.
 - BR asks about whether we need to vote to allow OK to continue to operate their State meet as is as well. DG believes that that is an independent vote, and that this vote on the 501(c)3 should happen first with discussion/votes on the operation of the State Meet(s) to happen second.
 - CL does not understand why a vote is even happening and believes it is ridiculous. He believes the WSO should be a coming together and that separating out events should not even be a question as it raises ethical concerns for him.
 - DG agrees with the ethical issues of having people on both boards and asks who they would be representing.
 - JV asks if it could become a conflict of interest, and wonders if she would still be on both if the 501(c)3 continued to exist.
 - CL emphasizes that one would have to ask if decisions by those members are in the best interest of the WSO or the best interest of the 501(c)3? To CL (and DG) that is a conflict of interest and an ethical issue.
 - BS disagrees in that the event in question is a local meet and not the WSO Championship.

- DG believes that it is conflict of interest due to the Texas State meet paying people to help run it (including two current WSO board members) and paying the Event Director to organize the event each year. And thus 3 current board members are financially incentivized to keep the status quo. Regardless of whether or not that is acted on, the conflict still exists which is why he believes the 501(c)3 should not exist – because people are and have been financially compensated from the Texas State Meet who are also WSO board members.
- RH is confused and disagrees on the ethical issues and notes his previous conversations with USAW about there being no ethical conflicts with a privately run State Championship, regardless of how profitable it was.
 - DG clarifies his issue to be with the potential bias of board members with a vote also being paid by the event director/State meet.
 - RH asks what those payments are? BS explains that a portion of proceeds from the State meet is used operate and put on the event (like salaries) including a payment to the Meet Director (BS) and in 2021 and 2022, to two Competition Secretaries (AW and BR) for their work.
 - RH still does not see an ethical issue with a private event being run by a non-profit ...
 - CL disagrees and has issues with people serving on and making decisions on two separate boards, because of the choice between decisions benefiting the WSO or benefiting the non-profit. He believes that any financial benefit from the non-profit makes those members inherently biased towards the non-profit. BS disagrees and notes that people faithfully serve on competing boards all the time.
 - Regardless of the intent of these board members or the (small) amounts of the payments, DG believes that this opportunity for a conflict of interest should not be available.
- DG calls for a vote over whether the Texas Weightlifting 501(c)3 will continue to exist as is.
 - In favor: RH, BR, BS, DW, AW.
 - Opposed: DG, CL, LP, JV.
 - Vote passes 5-4.

Meeting Wrap Up:

- Action items moving forward:
 - WSO Working Groups – DG will send an email out with working group members in order to create definitions.
 - DG to forward email from Andrea Andrews regarding USAW response to credit cards and reimbursement timeliness to entire WSO Board
 - A vote to create a WSO website will be postponed until the next meeting.
- Next meeting will be tentatively held on Sunday, May 8st at 7 pm.

Adjourned at 7:59 pm.