



MINUTES

of the

2019 Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Division of USA Fencing

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NOTE: The topics discussed and actions taken during the Meeting are not necessarily reported in the same sequence in which they occurred during the Meeting. For presentation in these Minutes, multiple discussions of the same or similar topics throughout the Meeting have been consolidated under appropriate single topic headings.

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The 2019 Annual Meeting (the “Meeting”) of the Tennessee Division (the “Division”) of USA Fencing (“USAF”) was held on Saturday, July 27, 2019, at The Standard Club at the Smith House, located at 167 Rosa L. Parks Blvd., Nashville, Tennessee. The Smith House is the only pre-Civil War grand townhouse still standing in downtown Nashville. The Standard Club itself conducts monthly one-on-one fencing events among its members, which in the tradition of classic gentlemen-fencing (now including the ladies) they call “duels.”

A. Notices

Initial Notices of the Meeting (the “Notice”) had been provided to Division Members (“Members”) on July 10, 2019, by a joint posting on the Division’s webpage and on the Division’s Face Book page. The Notices encouraged all eligible Division voters, who could, to attend the Meeting. The Notice listed the general topics that would be discussed at the Meeting, including the election of the Division’s officers for the 2019-20 Season, and reminded members about the USAF rules and deadlines that establish voter eligibility. Division Members were invited to remain after the Meeting, when drinks and dinner would be available for purchase.

On July 24, 2019, a second Notice was distributed to all eligible voters by a joint email from USA Fencing and the Tennessee Division. This second Notice repeated the information provide in the earlier Notice, but also included a Form of Proxy and explained the procedures how eligible voters could vote by proxy, if they were not coming to the Meeting themselves. (See **Attachments A1, A2, and A3.**)

B. Call to Order.

At the request of Chairman Robert Piraino, Secretary Ron Wilson announced that a quorum was present at the Meeting, either in person or by proxy. Chairman Piraino called the Annual Meeting to order at 5:50 p.m. CDT.

C. Chairman’s Opening Remarks and Overview of Selected Tennessee Fencing Clubs.

Chairman Piraino welcomed Members to the 2019 Annual Meeting and thanked them for devoting their Saturday evening to come into downtown Nashville and participate in the annual review of the Division. He noted that it was the first time that the Meeting has been held in such a beautiful venue as The Standard Club in Nashville’s historic Smith House in downtown Nashville. He reminded Members that immediately after the Meeting is adjourned, he hoped everyone would take advantage of being present at The Smith House and join him for dinner.

After his opening remarks, Chairman Piraino summarized the overall status of most of the fencing clubs in Tennessee. The following is list of some of the more notable developments among Tennessee clubs and school programs that Chairman Piraino shared with the Members:

(i) The Memphis University School continues to build its very active fencing program for high school-aged fencers. A sister club to the MUSFC, named St. Mary’s Fencing Club, has been in operation for about a year. There are plans to make the MUSFC operational year-round, not just during the school’s academic calendar. Plus, there is a possibility that the MUSFC’s membership may be opened to non-MUS students. A significant development is that long-time, and very successful head coach Brad Kroeker has stepped aside and Sergey Petrosyan has taken the reins as Head Coach. Coach Kroeker will stay involved as Assistant Coach. MUSFC (or MUSFC related clubs) has already scheduled nine tournaments for the coming season, almost double the number they held last season.

(ii) University of Tennessee Fencing Club (Knoxville) continues to grow its membership. They already have scheduled their popular Szathmary Open for September 28th. This leaves them room to hold another tournament during the spring of 2020, if they desire.

(iii) Middle Tennessee Fencing Club (not to be confused with Middle Tennessee State University Fencing Club) announced last October that they had hired Samir Ibramhov as their new head coach. Coach Ibramhov has had excellent success as both a fencer and coach in Europe, and he coached the Notre Dame saber team to a U.S. national championship. The Division welcomes Coach Ibramhov to Tennessee and wishes him great success at MTFC.

(iv) Saif Fencing Academy, a relatively new club located in Nolensville, was opened in 2018 by owner and head coach, Turki Alanazi. Coach Alanazi has 25 years of fencing experience primarily in Saudi Arabia. A couple of his fencers qualified and competed recently in the Summer Nationals in Columbus, Ohio. The Division also welcomes Coach Alanazi to Tennessee and we congratulate him on his new club's early success.

(v) The Lighthouse Christian School in Antioch intends to add fencing to its athletic programs during the 2019-20 season. Chairman Piraino and the Division will provide as much reasonable support as possible to help get this new high school fencing program off the ground. Developing new fencing programs in Tennessee high schools is one of the most important goals that Chairman Piraino intends to pursue this coming season. More about developing new high school fencing programs is discussed under the OLD BUSINESS section below.

D. OLD BUSINESS: Chairman's Update of an Ongoing Policy and Addressing One Recurring Business Matter.

Following his introductory remarks and review of the Division's clubs, Chairman Piraino then updated an ongoing policy of the Division and addressed the status of an annually recurring business matter. Both of these matters are highly relevant for the coming 2019-20 fencing season.

1. Enhanced Focus on High School Fencing Clubs and Programs. The Division will continue to support and encourage the growth and competition activity of the private clubs and existing school fencing programs throughout the State. After several years of observation and analysis, Chairman Piraino has concluded that in addition to supporting the traditional clubs and existing school programs, the key to future consistent growth of fencing in Tennessee, and making it more popular than ever, is to develop new high school and middle school fencing programs. Chairman Piraino already has been seeking, and will continue to seek out (i) high school and middle school athletic directors (both public and private schools); (ii) point out the advantages and benefits that a properly managed fencing program can offer their young athletes; (iv) encourage a start-up fencing program at their school; and (v) to the extent the Division has available equipment and financial resources, offer as much assistance as it can to support such start-up fencing programs.

2. Location of the Division's 2019-20 Qualifying Tournaments. The Division conducts two qualifying tournaments each year (Junior Olympics and Summer Nationals). It is a perpetual issue each year to select a location in which to hold these tournaments. It is important that all fencers in the State have reasonable travel access to the location where these tournaments are held and that they are not scheduled in conflict with other available tournaments or school functions. This is a difficult task, because the primary areas of the State in which there are centers of fencing activity are scattered widely across Tennessee, in and around the Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga areas. Also, various other fencing tournaments and school activities are in constant conflict with one another for weekend dates. For the 2019-20 season, the Division's Summer Nationals Qualifier will be held in Nashville on April 25-26, 2020. Chairman Piraino expects to announce the location for this season's Junior Olympics Qualifier during early August 2019.

E. NEW BUSINESS: Chairman's Thoughts Regarding the Division's Growth and Financial Stability.

Chairman Piraino had no New Business to present and none was brought before the Meeting from the floor. The Chairman took this opportunity to inform Members about his plans and thoughts for the future: not only about growing the Division's membership, but also making it better.

1. Veteran Fencers (age VET 40 and above). An untapped resource for growth? It had come to the Chairman's attention that in the Nashville area, and perhaps throughout the State, there are a number of older former fencers, who are inactive and no longer participate in any club or other fencing organization. In Chairman Piraino's own club, during the last couple of years he has had several inactive older fencers approach him, and they now come to one or two evening open-fencing sessions per week, and occasionally take a private lesson or two.

While it generally is true that fencing, particularly competitive fencing, primarily is a young man's or young woman's sport, Chairman Piraino has seen first-hand evidence that there likely is a latent interest in some older former fencers for picking up a weapon and returning to the strip, especially if they know they can spar with a few fencers who are close to their own age. Chairman Piraino challenges all Division Members to try to identify such Veteran former fencers in their area and invite them to visit their local fencing club. He also encourages all Division club owners and coaches to make their clubs Vet-friendly and accommodate the older fencers' needs, whose school days are long behind them and their practice time often is very limited. The results may surprise you. Finally, Chairman Piraino would like to hear any ideas and suggestions from the Division Members on how to find, recruit, and reasonably accommodate inactive Vet fencers, who may want to return to the sport.

2. Basic Financing for the Division's Mission and Activities. Chairman Piraino reminded Members that, like USA Fencing nationally, the Tennessee Division is a tax-exempt sports and educational organization. The Division must raise its own funds. It has no endowment or other source of funding other than what it can generate for itself. As a legally mandated non-profit organization, if after all expenses (holding tournaments; paying referees' fees and expenses; buying medals and awards; buying and maintaining fencing equipment; etc.) have been deducted from the Division's revenues, whatever excess funds remain, if any, must, by law, be plowed back into the Division's legitimate activities – e.g., buy better equipment; hold more tournaments; hire higher-rated referees; pursue special projects, such as assisting high school start-up fencing programs; etc. The more revenue the Division can generate, the more financial resources it has to improve fencing in Tennessee, beyond just paying day-to-day expenses and hosting the mandatory Division qualifying tournaments. Chairman Piraino has a list of projects and improvements he would like to pursue for the purpose of making the Division better. (Most of his wish-list projects have been discussed at prior Annual Meetings.) However, availability of Division-generated funds, or lack thereof, limits how much the Division can do to improve Tennessee fencing. Chairman Piraino must constantly juggle priorities based on what funds are available for any particular Division project.

To accomplish its mission to support and improve Tennessee fencing, the Division has many, many costs and expenses, but it only has four sources of income:

- i. Entry fees** for Division tournaments. (i.e., Junior Olympics Qualifier and Summer Nationals Qualifier).
- ii. Sanctioning fees.** (Paid by clubs that hold their own sanctioned tournaments. \$5 per fencer.).
- iii. Membership dues rebates.** (USAF pays the Division \$3 for each Member who joins or rejoins USAF each season.)
- iv. Donations** from parents or anyone else. Donations are tax deductible for the contributor. In Tennessee donations are relatively rare and usually are modest amounts, but we appreciate them when we get them.

3. Factors Limiting the Division's Growth and Improvement. Any volunteers to help? As discussed above, lack of funds is a significant factor that limits what the Division can do to pursue projects and policies that in the long run will grow and improve competitive fencing in Tennessee. On a personal note, Chairman Piraino explained that equally critical to lack of funds are the demands made on his time that prohibit him

from devoting 100% of himself to all of the Division's projects he would like to pursue. For this reason, Chairman Piraino made a request that if any Members or others are interested and have the time, he would consider working with them as volunteers to help him manage one or more of the Division's improvement projects.

4. Encourage Existing Tennessee Clubs to Compete More Within Tennessee. Chairman Piraino noted that compared to a few years ago, during the last two seasons fewer clubs have held their own Tennessee Division-sanctioned tournaments. At the same time, it appears that with a few exceptions, several Tennessee clubs participate sparingly, or not at all, in the sanctioned tournaments sponsored by their sister Tennessee clubs. To try to reverse this trend, during the 2019-20 season, Chairman Piraino intends to encourage existing clubs to become more competitive in Tennessee by perhaps hosting at least one sanctioned tournament on their own, and also encouraging their club or school team members to participate in more sanctioned tournaments held by their sister Tennessee clubs.

5. Chairman's Top Three Division Priorities He Intends to Focus on During the 2019-20 Season.

Before turning to the Division's financial reports, Chairman Piraino reiterated the three highest priority areas where he intends to focus as much of his time as possible this coming season. These priorities are of special interest to him and go beyond the usual tasks of juggling the scheduling of clubs' sanctioned tournaments; conducting and managing the Division's qualifying tournaments; and performing other basic Division responsibilities.

(i). Help start new fencing programs at the high school and middle school levels. Chairman Piraino believes that helping develop new fencing programs in high schools and middle schools not only provides a great opportunity for the kids involved, but it also is a key to growing the Division's membership. Over time, school fencing programs encourage a lasting long-term interest in fencing and strengthens the popularity of the sport among youth fencers, parents, school coaching staffs and their athletic programs. This goal includes encouraging, and perhaps providing some financial assistance, for more high school to hold and participant in tournaments and championships. In addition, increasing school fencing programs and promoting their activities is a prerequisite to one of Chairman Piraino's long-time visions for fencing in Tennessee, which is ultimately to help establish a Tennessee High School Fencing League.

(ii). Increase Division's membership. Growth in the number of Tennessee Division fencers, including non-competitive supporting members, is the first step to the overall improvement of Tennessee fencing. When it comes to members, more is better. In addition, increasing the Division's membership is directly linked to improving the Division's revenues, which leads to Chairman Piraino's third priority for the 2019-20 season.

(iii). Increase Division's revenues. Higher revenues will provide the Division with financial resources to do more to improve Tennessee fencing across the State. Achieving this third primary goal is primarily a function of increasing the number of fencers in Tennessee, which in turn will positively impact (i) the number of fencers who enter the Division's qualifying tournaments (entry fees); (ii) the number of fencers across the State who participate in Division-sanctioned tournaments, put on by the Division's clubs (sanctioning fees); and (iii) increase the amounts of USAF's membership rebates to the Division. Even though the rebates are relatively modest, every dollar from any source helps the Division achieve its goals.

F. Treasurer's Financial Reports.

After Chairman Piraino completed his comments and discussions about the Division's old and new business, and his thoughts about the Division's future, Treasurer Wilson distributed copies of drafts of the Division's 2018-19 Financial Statement and the Budget Guidelines for the 2019-20 Season, which begins on August 1, 2019.

1. 2018-19 Financial Statement. Treasurer Wilson explained that for the 2018-19 Season, the draft Financial Statement indicated that the Division's expenses for the Season exceeded its revenues by

approximately \$3,000. He further explained that the Financial Statement strictly reports all revenues actually received and all expenses actually spent during the Season, as reflected on the Division's monthly Bank statements. However, some of the expenses and revenues reported on the 2018-19 Financial Statement were attributed to the prior 2017-18 Season. For example, a single large expense of almost \$2,000 was paid during the 2018-19 Season, but the expense itself was incurred during the prior 2017-18. Season. This carry-over of expenses and expenses between seasons occurs almost every year and raises no cause for concern.

In addition, the R3 revenue account (Entry Fees) and the R7.6 revenue account (TN Fencing League) both showed totals that appeared not to reflect what our experience indicates they should be. We are auditing these accounts and expect to find some unreported income, or payments due but not yet received, both of which will help off-set the apparent \$3,000 deficiency reflected on the Financial Statement for this Season. If so, the late funds will be booked during the coming Season, 2019-20.

2. Budget Guidelines for the 2019-20 Season. For Budget planning purposes, the effect described above of some revenues and expenses crossing over between Seasons was taken into account when predicting what the Division's revenue and expenses are expected to be during the 2019-20 Season.

Treasurer Wilson explained that after July 31, 2019 (the end of the 2018-19 Season), both the draft Financial Statement and the draft Budget Guidelines will be revised and updated, to the extent any new financial information becomes known by July 31st. The final Financial Statement must be filed with USA Fencing and the final Budget Guidelines will be distributed to the Division's officers.

G. Voting Actions Taken at the Meeting.

1. NONE, other than election of 2019-20 Officers. There were no significant new policies or policy changes proposed, or funding requests made, at the Meeting that required a vote of approval by the Division Members. Chairman Piraino's focus and efforts for the coming Season are well within the Division's on-going mission to promote, support, and develop fencing in Tennessee, and in the case of any significant funding authority, has been approved by Members at prior Annual Meetings.

2. Election of 2019-20 Officers. After the Treasurer's Financial Reports were discussed and the Budget Guidelines were accepted by the Division Members (subject to possible revisions after July 31, 2019, as previously explained by Treasurer Wilson), Chairman Piraino asked Secretary Wilson to list the names of nominees, who prior to the Meeting had expressed their desire to stand for election or re-election for each Division officer position for the 2019-20 Season. Secretary Wilson stated the names of the nominees, and their desired position, as listed below. Chairman Piraino asked if there were any other nominations from the floor for any office, or if there were any further discussion about any nominee. There were none. Under Article VII, Section 2 of the Division's Bylaws, since there was only one unopposed nomination for each officer position, Secretary Wilson cast a unanimous vote FOR each of the unopposed nominees. The Division's duly elected officers for the 2019-20 Season are as follows:

Chairman – Robert Piraino, reelected. (*Music City Fencing Club*)

1st Vice Chair – William Curtis, reelected. (*University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Fencing Club*)

2nd Vice Chair – Zeno Doeleman, newly elected. (*Music City Fencing Club*) (see **Attachment B** for a summary of Zeno's qualifications.)

Secretary/Treasurer – Ron Wilson, reelected. (*Cumberland d'Escrime*)

In accordance with ARTICLE IV of the Bylaws, these officers will serve through the Division's next annual Meeting in 2020; or until their resignation; or until otherwise removed from their position in accordance with ARTICLE IV, SECTIONS 6 or 7 of the Bylaws.

H. Adjournment. After the election, Chairman Piraino asked whether: (i) there were any further old or new business to discuss; (ii) anyone had anything additional to say to Members; or (iii) there were any questions. Hearing none, Chairman Piraino asked for a motion to adjourn the Meeting. Secretary Wilson

moved to adjourn the Meeting, which motion was seconded by Zeno Doeleman. The motion was unanimously accepted by the Members by voice vote. Chairman Piraino adjourned the Meeting at 7:30 p.m. CDT.

I. Attachments to these Minutes. Copies of these Attachments are available upon request to the Division's Secretary. Please email requests to *tennesseefencing@gmail.com*.

A 2019 ANNUAL MEETING NOTICES

- A1. Webpage Notice (July 10th);
- A2. Face Book Notice (July 10th); and
- A3. Joint Email Notice (July 24th)

B BIOGRAPHICAL for Zeno Doeleman (Newly elected Vice-Chairperson)

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald F. Wilson

[The physically signed original of these Minutes is maintained in the Tennessee Division's permanent records.]

Ronald F. Wilson
Secretary & Treasurer
Tennessee Division of USA Fencing
August 4, 2019