July 27, 2024

Virtual Annual Meeting of TN Div. of USAF

Attendees included: Stuart Bernstein, Marty Lang, John Teitenberg, Christy Alvord, Semaj Toussaint, Stephanie Toussaint, Mike Szathmary, Ron Wilson, Jacob Webb, TK Kim, Rachel Ward, Landon Springfield and Sergey Petrosyan (arrived late).

Marty opening statement: “I had an agenda for the year, get TN division on par with neighboring divisions.” Get us at least on par with Alabama division. In August, created parents committee, asked clubs to provide dates when their club could hold a local event or events. Update contacts and let us know what assistance they wanted from division. Only had one club respond – Memphis University School.

Tried to establish a stronger set of referees. Clinic for foil and epee in September at MTSU.

Other activities during the year:

In September there were 4 tournaments – 3 in Memphis and one in Springhill

Asked if any club wanted to host JO qualifier. One club initially volunteered but then backed out. By default, Marty’s club hosted Jr. Olympic trials in December.

Then we had the resignation of one of the vice chairs. “I believe that a division officer has to be available to help support the division. And this was not happening with this individual since his priorities were with a neighboring division and not the Tennessee division. So please be very careful as to whom we elect as an officer in the future.”

The following local events conducted during the ‘22-‘23 season: 3 in Memphis, 1 in Springhill, 1 at UTK, 1 in Brentwood, a division event at MTSU, and a division event at NAF.

Marty stated we did not reach the goal of upping Division a step or two. Too much focus on everyone’s individual club rather than the division as a whole. The only way to move forward is with involvement of individuals supporting division goals.

Stuart presented the financial report. Current checking balance of $6,309.71. We opened at $7,305.77. Expenses were replacing 2 scoring machines. Income paid for near half of machines cost.

Kathy prepared profit and loss report. Total income of $2,266. Total expenses of $3262. Less our income, leaving a loss of $996 for the year.

Following question from John T., the division “sanction fee” was clarified as fee that each fencer pays to compete in a tournament. Marty – so it’s obvious the more local events that are sanctioned, that actually brings more revenue into the Division.

Stuart presented slate of officers proposed for ’23-’24:

Stuart Bernstein – chair

Landon Springfield – vice chair representing Memphis

Daniel Morrell – vice chair representing east part of state

Kathy Dillard – continuing as treasurer

Secretary position is open

Stephanie Toussaint expressed interest in serving as secretary.

Any other nominations, or OK with slate as proposed? No comments.

John Teitenberg motioned and Ron Wilson seconded to vote on entire slate rather than individual. Motion passed.

Stuart – do we need proxy votes? It was determined that since we had quorum we did not need proxy votes.

Slate of officers was approved as proposed. Marty turned the meeting over to Stuart as new chair.

Stuart – next on agenda is amending by-laws and operating guide based on USAF required formats. We have been running division without following by-laws in some areas. Executive committee is supposed to meet a minimum of once to set fall schedule and once late fall to set winter schedule. New by-laws are much more clear regarding removal of officers. The operating guide does not specify how executive committee sets tournament schedules.

There was general discussion regarding how to increase the number of youth events and how to publicize those. Question raised regarding use of USAF email blast to publicize local events. We get 4 emails per year. Stuart proposed before we get too far into promoting events, need to settle issue of adopting by-laws and operating guide. The only time, according to our old by-laws, that we can amend or replace them is at this meeting. USAF said they want them done by August 1st.

John T. – Section 7.1, says “scheduling process and” and then there’s nothing. Do we have something to propose to fill in there? Are we going to be able to get everyone back for another meeting before August 1?

Christy A. – could we adopt the boiler plate today and then figure out our operating practices as not part of the formal by-laws?

Stuart – since we don’t have a process now, why don’t we adopt as-is and amend it next year?

Chris Moran proposed adopting the USAF by-laws and operating guide as written. Christy Alvord seconded, and the motion passed by voice vote. Stuart – they are already on the division webpage as “draft,” so he will just change the tile.

Stuart – now back to the question of local tournaments. Local tournaments in the middle of the state were limited by publicity and space.

Local clubs are not large enough to run 4 strips. We can rent space at MTSU for $450 to $500 for a basketball court sized area. If we want to go small – we could run 2 strips for a youth event at some of the local clubs. Marty said he could run 4 strips and we could run up to 12 at the gymnasium next door if we needed to. Stuart – so if we can come up with dates, should be no problem running youth events. We have enough referees now where we can run one in the middle of the state. Marty – the USAF website lists all of the rated referees from TN.

Rachel Ward – since we are adopting by-laws as they are, will we know when youth tournaments are scheduled? Stuart - since we adopted by-laws, can now elect executive committee, which can only happen at this meeting.

Rachel W. suggested Dan Moore as at large member for youth fencing. Rachel W. made motion, second was inaudible. Approved.

At Stuart’s suggestion Mike Szathmary volunteered for executive committee as MTSU representative. Motion by Jacob Webb, second by John T. Approved.

John T. – suggests we have executive members from each region of the state and representative from each club to help coordinate especially youth events.

Stuart – we will have to recruit people for next year to get wider representation.

Stuart – last agenda item, which may be more aspirational than actually going to happen, – fall tournament schedule from executive committee by August 15th. How quickly can people get together ideas of when their club wants to run a tournament? Or should we just leave it the way it is for fall and when people get it together submit a tournament form? And for the winter tournaments we’ll try to be in compliance.

Landon – our tournament schedule is already set for fall and spring since we are associated with a school and need to fit school calendar. We already have 4 tournaments scheduled. Sergey P asked if it will be fine to do that every year, since the club has to schedule events well in advance of school starting.

Stuart – we can’t get MTSU schedule ready until officers show up at beginning of school year. And Vanderbilt should be ready to host tourney in spring. Cannot do one in fall because of parking issues associated with football games.

Stuart – how about we send email to all clubs (coaches) asking for fall schedule? Lay out what national events might cause conflict and ask for schedule by 11th or 12th of Sept and the board and executive committee can review and finalize before Sept 15th. We can do an email vote. Jacob W. suggests we use one of the four USAF emails to send out the finalized schedule when we have it.

John T. suggested clubs rank their proposed events to avoid having tourneys on same date.

Stuart – Stephanie and I will need to update the tournament bid form to be in compliance with the new operating guide.

Stuart realized we need one more executive board member. Need executive member representing Marty’s club on board. Marty asks to table that item.

Sergey Petrosyan – if our goal is to grow the division, how do we bring clubs together and promote interaction/comradery? Why can’t we bring them together to work as one?

John T. – I think if we have more local events, particularly youth events, it will generate interest and eventually motivate parents to travel for tournaments outside their region. Stuart – none of the university clubs are competitive. Christy A. – kids more likely to go to local events until they get some experience and then will be more willing to travel. Stuart – yeah, smaller, unsanctioned inter-club events just to get kids hooked on the experience. Sergey P – we try to have both types of events. My club teaches competitive fencing, which is different from recreational.

Rachel W. – so possibly it could go back to having a Facebook presence.

Stuart – we need someone to restart Division Facebook page. Rachel W. - I don’t know anything about it but could try to get it going again. Semaj T. volunteered help restart FB page and suggested also using Instagram since youth are not on Facebook. Stuart will coordinate with Semaj to get those started. Rachel volunteered to assist. Stuart – division officers will all have to have the ability to add content and oversee the accounts.

Stuart – could also put up flyers at each club listing all the upcoming tourneys to promote awareness among club participants. Sergey – that’s what we do at our club. John T. – we have used a white board to list out all upcoming events in region.

Marty – we also have AskFred, where fencers and parents can look and see all upcoming events.

Discussion about transferring records to new secretary. Stuart to create google drive for depositing digital records.

Marty with some closing good news - we had 3 fencers this past year gain the highest rating (A) in epee – John T, Allen Arrowsmith, and Marisole (last name?). So let’s go foil and saber time to catch up.