



Member, United States
Olympic & Paralympic Committee

USA Team Handball Board of Directors meeting

Minutes of the 7-Jan-2021 special meeting teleconference

Board members in attendance

- Michael Wall -- Chair
- Bill Bigham
- David Buckman
- Tracy Deforge
- Jennifer Fithian
- Patrick Jalabert -- acting as secretary
- Dee Miller
- Camille Nichols
- Julian Orr
- Mark Ortega

Board members absent

- Sandra De La Riva Repede

USATH Staff in attendance

- Ryan Johnson -- CEO

Invited guests in (partial) attendance

- Gerd Butzeck (Forum Club Handball)
- Michael King (D3M Handball)

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 10 am MT by Michael Wall, Chair. Mr. Wall thanked board members for joining, and reminded them that several topics would be discussed, as detailed in the shared agenda. Mr. Wall asked Mr. Jalabert to act as secretary, and take minutes for the meeting.

Agenda item #1 -- Welcome new CEO (Ryan Johnson)

Mr. Johnson expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve as CEO. He noted that, despite it only being his fourth day on the job, he was aiming to schedule as many meetings as possible to get up to speed with the sport, the existing systems in place (e.g. Sport:80), etc... Mr. Johnson expressed that he realizes there are lots of pieces to bring together, including some low hanging fruit on the road to financial solvency of the organization.



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Agenda item #2 -- Welcome new athlete directors (Jennifer Fithian and Mark Ortega)

Mr. Wall welcomed Jennifer Fithian and Mark Ortega to the board and expressed his gratitude to both new athlete directors for their willingness to step into the role. He mentioned that training modules from the USOPC will be made available to them. These will also be available to other board members, including the existing members. Mr. Ortega mentioned that the athlete directors have already begun working with the Athlete Advisory Committee (AAC), and will have regular meetings with the AAC before board meetings (one week ahead of time typically). He mentioned their focus on making sure board meeting contents can be shared with AAC. Ms. Fithian echoed Mr. Ortega's comments and mentioned that she is excited to be on the board and work with the AAC.

Agenda item #3 -- World Championships update

Mr. Wall expressed the board's great appreciation for the extensive amount of work that Ms. Miller has put into the coordination effort towards sending a competitive team to the World Championships. The rest of the board echoed the sentiment. Ms. Miller then provided an update on recent developments and work in progress. She detailed the financial situation and stated that, if expected resources are made available, the project would stay within budget. Ms. Miller said that a final budget update would be shared with the Board by the end of the week.

Mr. Orr provided an update from training camp in Denmark, stating that the team was blending well together and looking good. He noted that having Ms. Zhang present in Denmark had provided an excellent opportunity to engage new communities over social media. In order to limit the expenses related to getting all the athletes to Egypt in time for the technical meeting, Mr. Orr (Team Manager) and Mr. Jalabert (Head of the Delegation) were designated to attend the technical meeting on behalf of the coaching staff.

Lastly, Mr. Wall mentioned that the possibility of having TV coverage of the event was promising, with interest coming from ESPN+ and Yahoo Sports through the organization's partnership with Verizon.

Agenda item #4 -- Didier Dinart

Mr. Dinart's agent had reached out to USA Team Handball expressing interest in a head coach position. The board discussed his background. The unanimous consensus was that it would be worth reaching out to gauge his level of interest.

Action item

Mr. Wall offered to respond to Mr. Dinart's agent by introducing Mr. Johnson to pursue discussions.

Audit & Compensation Committee report

Before moving onto the next agenda topic, Mr. Wall asked for an update as to the organization's finances.



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Ms. Nichols stated that the 2020 budget still needed to be finalized, and would be presented at the February meeting, along with a proposed 2021 operating budget. She previewed the known sources of 2021 funding (the USOPC, the IHF, and the Verizon sponsorship) and the projected staff operating expenses, in light of Ms. Hewitt's decision to leave her position.

Further discussion was tabled, as Mike King (presenter for agenda item #5), and Gerd Butzeck (Forum Club Handball) were ready to join the teleconference.

Agenda item #5 -- Mike King presentation

Mike King (D3M handball) and Gerd Butzeck (Forum Club Handball) joined the call at 10.30 am MT.

Mr. King presented his background. The objective of the discussion was to get a quick response from the board, to keep the momentum going, or adjust the strategy fast. Mr. Wall noted that he had not yet forwarded the finalized proposed agreement to the board yet, preferring to let Mr. King present the project first.

The key takeaways from the presentation were a) no cost to USATH, and b) D3M committing to contribute \$100,000 and 150 new USATH membership registrations per year per market, in eight locations, starting in 2022. The discussion then transitioned to a Q&A segment. The Board asked questions as to the timeline, the implications of the proposal for Division 1, the organizational structure and leadership of the proposed league, and the desire to explore the formation of a women's handball league and to have American players more involved in the league over time. After Mr. King and Mr. Butzeck left the call, the Board continued discussing the topic and the pros and cons of the proposal. Overall, the board was enthused with the concept, but sought more information on the management aspects of the proposed league. Mr. Wall and Mr. Johnson said that they would continue discussions with Mr. King and his partners and report to the Board.

Action item

Mr. Wall asked Board members to provide their individual feedback on the proposal, including any additional questions.

Agenda item #6 -- USOPC 2021 funding

This topic was tabled for a future meeting.

Agenda item #7 -- Verizon sponsorship

Mr. Wall stated that Verizon had renewed its support of USATH with a \$175,000 sponsorship for 2021. Mr. Wall also explained to the Board recent conversations he had with IPG360 and their expectations as to a commission payable as to the Verizon sponsorship and future sponsorships pursuant to the agreement between IPG360 and USATH.

Agenda item #8 -- Proposed amendment to "independence" definition

The amendment to Section 6.6(B) of the bylaws, as presented in an attachment to the meeting agenda, was discussed. Mr. Wall noted that the proposed amendment is consistent with the USOPC's preference for NGB Boards being constituted of a majority of independent directors with no background in the NGB's sport. A suggestion was made to extend the list of disqualifying



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organizations to include professional handball leagues, in addition to the confederations listed in the proposed amendment.

Motion

A motion was made to approve the amendment, and was duly seconded. Hearing no objections, the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda item #9 -- Proposed changes to Nominating & Governance Committee Composition

The amendment to Section 8.10 of the bylaws, as presented in an attachment to the meeting agenda, was discussed. Mr. Wall noted that the amendment was consistent with the board's vote in July 2021 to re-constitute the N&G Committee to enhance the likelihood that the committee, in evaluating candidates that it appoints to independent seats on the board, would give equal consideration to candidates with no handball background as those with handball experience. The composition of the six-member committee will include two athlete representatives and satisfy the updated USOPC requirement of 33% athlete representation. Three of the four independent members of the committee would be chosen by the board and the fourth member would be selected by the committee itself.

Motion

A motion was made to approve the amendment, and was duly seconded. Hearing no objections, the motion passed unanimously.

Additional topics (not listed on the agenda)

The agenda items having been addressed, Mr. Wall noted that the bylaws need to be restated in one version to incorporate amendments made in the last few years. Mr. Wall will request an associate from his law firm to restate the bylaws which work would be done on a pro bono basis.

Ms. Nichols mentioned that the Audit and Compensation Committee was in need of an athlete representative. Mr. Ortega volunteered to fill that role.

Motion

A motion was made to appoint Mr. Ortega to the Audit Committee, and was duly seconded. Hearing no objections, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Johnson requested some background information on the collegiate initiative. Ms. Miller provided some early background, pertaining to the IHF's funding of the initiative since 2018. Mr. Jalabert (who along with Mr. Orr has had some involvement in some of the task force work) provided some information on the work that the collegiate task force, established by Barry Siff during his tenure as CEO. Mr. Ortega voiced his interest in getting involved in supporting the initiative. Mr. Johnson committed to following up on next steps.

Scheduling



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The next board regular meeting was confirmed for 4-Feb-2021.

Motion

A motion to adjourn was made at 12 pm MT, and was duly seconded. Hearing no objections, the motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Patrick Jalabert served as Secretary.