

Minutes of a meeting Of the South African Bridge Federation Committee held on 30 September and 1 October at the Links, Johannesburg.

Present: Apologies:

James Grant (President) Barbara Crosby (Border)

Jocelyn Ashberg (Vice- President) Peter Ward (Southern Cape)

Bernard Donde (Treasurer)

Kit Gilmour (Secretary)

Neil MacLeod (KZN)

Michele Alexander (WCBU)

Delene Spencer (NGBU)

Roz Bernstein (GBU)

Helen Kruger (GBU)

Arie Ridderhoff (ECBU)

Andrew Cruise (Chairman Tournament Committee)

Mark Oliff (Legal advisor)

Welcome

James began the meeting by welcoming the members. Particularly those from afar.

Matters arising

It was noted that the decision to charge 10% on BBO entries published in our January minutes was later rescinded.

SABF Database

James noted that one of the areas where we had fallen down badly thanks to COVID was the clubs' responsibility to keep an up-to-date list of their members on the database, many having made no change to their lists since 2019. This was further exacerbated by the introduction of virtual clubs where in some cases no effort had been made to list members. There were many advantages in doing this not only for the club where amongst other things they were able to produce a report showing them which of their members were still to pay subs but also for the unions who were able to see how much they expected to receive in subs from each club.

James went on to say that since 2019 we had lost members for a number of reasons such as death and emigration and a tidy up of our database was long overdue. Rather than each union trying manually to remove players they had lost James proposed that a programme be written producing a

report for each union of purged members. He went on to explain that records were not removed from the database but archived and could easily be resurrected if the need arose and the report produced would allow each union to contact those players who no longer played and encourage them to rejoin. This proposal was agreed to along with the request to the unions to encourage their clubs to get their house in order for January 2024.

On further discussion it was agreed that the club to which a member paid his SABF subs determined his union affiliation.

Constitution

Mark felt strongly that should we choose to revamp it we would need attorneys involved and that this was a very costly exercise the last time it was done. He felt this was unnecessary as currently its principles are in line with SASCO's regarding discrimination, transformation etc. As for SASCO we were not obliged to follow their provincial structures. His feeling was that a constitution gives a framework, but cannot deal with every possible situation which could arise. The meeting then agreed that a new constitution was unnecessary.

Have we too many unions and should we reduce this number? The SABF cannot tell Unions what to do but we can consult with them, pointing out that some restructuring seems desirable.

WCBU

Michele Alexander now recused herself.

The president of Hermanus Bridge Club, Ian Holdsworth, having collected SABF subs from all his members in 2021 and 2022, had allowed a large number to default in 2023. This was condoned by WCBU, but is not acceptable to SABF. A letter shall be sent to him, giving 30 days to bring his club into compliance, after which in the event of noncompliance, the Hermanus club shall be disaffiliated. The president of WCBU (Mark Kenyon) claimed it was not the responsibility of the union to collect fees, that they would not collect from "out of towners" and that James Grant had exceeded his powers by withholding BBO rebates in lieu of membership fees. Further, an article was published in the August WCBU newsletter bringing the game and the SABF into disrepute. This was written by a WCBU member Brian Paxton, and Mark Oliff had confirmed that this had been done after consultation with the WCBU committee. In an attempt to de-escalate the conflict between WCBU and the SABF, Mark Oliff suggested setting up a mediation meeting, and, as a gesture of goodwill the monies from BBO were paid to WCBU. WCBU has indicated that their willingness to attend a

mediation meeting would depend on the outcome of this meeting.

The committee was now asked to vote on 3 resolutions while James recused himself, Michele Alexander returned, and Jocelyn stepped into the chair:

1 Should disciplinary action be taken against both the individuals concerned in these actions as well as the WC Union as a body?

2 Should the disciplinary action comprise the reiteration of the SABF's offer of mediation, and if this is rejected, a disciplinary hearing be held?

3 Should James Grant be censured for overstepping his authority?

The committee unanimously approved resolutions 1 and 2 and rejected question 3.

James rejoined the meeting.

Tournaments

Andrew Cruise was present at the meeting as chairman of the tournament committee to give an update on Congress, Interclub and Interprovincial events, as well as trials for next year. Firstly, Andrew expressed the SABF's gratitude to Alon Apteker for his generous donation towards expenses for holding Congress in Cape Town. He went on to report that Kelvin Grove is the venue for Congress, and that a special price had been negotiated at Newlands Sun Hotel . A fair amount of interest had been evinced from abroad. Teams entry fee was set at R4500 per team and R1500 per pair.

Interclub will be on 10-12 November on RealBridge, at central venues, where monitors shall be present. TDs who can manage RB will have to be sourced by Unions. Entry will be R960 per team. Eligibility rules to play in the Berkowitz shall be put on the web.

The 2024 Trials shall be pairs, on RealBridge at central venues. Entrants must be prepared to abide by all the rules and conditions without exception.

The committee decided that because of the cost of entering teams in international events, we shall only send 3 teams, Open, Women and Mixed, and that no further personal subsidies shall be give except in cases of real need. Only the entry fees shall be paid. Theses trials will be Open/ Women 13-20 April and mixed 4-11 May. The first 3 pairs shall constitute the team. Entry fee shall be R100 per session .

Red point events: 1 online tournament shall be allowed for smaller unions, as long as they hold a live red point competition as well.

Tournament Directors

The lack of highly qualified tournament and technical directors had now become a major problem in South Africa. A countrywide canvass needed to take place to discover who might be interested in filling these posts and online courses arranged for their training.

Budget for 2024

Bernard produced his budget, showing results of different fees on the Federation funds. After some discussion it was agreed R250 would be the SABF subs for 2024.

Bridge training

Arie reported that SABF had sponsored over 300 people for lessons online none of whom had joined an affiliated club though a number of them still played each week on our sponsored RealBridge tournament. He had also given lessons at his club in Port Alfred, where from an initial intake of 70 they had retained between 30 and 40 people. He feels this shows teaching is far more successful if done through clubs. He has gained permission to print Paul Marston's books here, which will be distributed to teachers here in an effort to ensure uniformity. Delene said Pretoria has a big teaching academy, but the people don't join clubs, as they only want to play socially.

Transformation has proved very difficult as our human resources are declining in numbers and most people are reluctant to go into the areas of need. Helen suggested trying to have Bridge put on Discovery's Vitality programme.

On the subject of formal training of qualified teams both James and Roz reported that because of prior commitments it was very difficult to pin people down to a day and time to practice or play matches. Bernard suggested a functional captain be appointed to arrange these things and make sure teams had checked opponents' convention cards. SABF has asked members of the teams that played in Marrakech for an article for the bulletin.

Elections 2024

James reminded those present that they would all be up for re-election in 2024.

Website

It was agreed that our webmaster's stipend be increased to R1000 per month

General

Delene asked on behalf of her members why they should pay subs to SABF? James replied that if they wanted to play Bridge as a competitive sport with leagues, rankings and tournaments run under regulated conditions, and send teams to participate in International events, then money was

needed to pay for these things.

Fund raising was an issue and Michele Alexander volunteered to take on this role on behalf of the SABF.

Jocelyn asked James to put an advertising flyer for Congress on the website.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 13h45.