



**U.S. Association of Blind Athletes
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes – November 20, 2024**

Present:

Mark Ackermann, Chair
Skye Arthur-Banning, Vice Chair
Gary Remensnyder, Treasurer
David Cohen, Board Member
Jennifer Demby, Board Member
Matt Simpson, Athlete Board Member
Brian Eaton, Independent Director
Eve Wright Taylor, Board Member
Eliana Mason, Athlete Board Member
Calahan Young, Athlete Board Member
Zach Buhler, Athlete Board Member
Tyler Merren, USOPC AAC Alternate
John Kusku, Chair of Ethics & Judicial Committee
Tracie Foster, Chair of Nominations & Governance Committee
Molly Quinn, CEO
Catherine Raney Norman, Staff
Breann Scott, Staff

Absent:

Amy Wasson, Secretary

The meeting took place via teleconference. The meeting was recorded.

Call to Order / Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by vice chair, Skye Arthur-Banning at 4:00 p.m. MST.

Conflict of Interest

Mark asked if any board members had a conflict of interest. No such conflicts were declared. Board was instructed to declare a conflict of interest if an item arose during the meeting or executive session.

Chair Board Highlights

Mark provided an update on the NGB Recertification process sharing that there are 42 compliance procedures that the organization are audited on by the USOPC. The board was notified that the bylaws required revisions, that are related to incorporating blind soccer to allow for proper representation on the board. Other changes are minor updates to remain compliant with USOPC standards and guidelines. Overall compliance was discussed to remind board members of the annual SafeSport, conflict of interest and background checks (every two years) and the importance of timeliness. Mark reported to the board that the blind soccer team will be officially ranked after their tournament earlier this month. He thanked the board members that attended the tournament on behalf of the board, David Cohen, Gary Remensnyder, and Skye Arthur-Banning. David & Gary spoke about the tournament, seeing the competition and how proud it was to watch the USA



Blind Soccer men's team represent Team USA. Skye was recognized for his work in the referee certification program that ran prior to the tournament. Skye mentioned nine (9) referees were certified in blind soccer and having the lead International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) referee there to mentor during the series of games was invaluable.

Mark reported to the board that most of the Men's and Women's National Goalball teams were in Colorado Springs this past weekend to officially begin our transition to U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center (OPTC). The MOU with OPTC was signed October 30 which has delayed the goalball floor construction by about 3 months. There is other gym space reserved for the training camps in order to start the first training camp in February. The board appreciates both teams' patience and Mark believes this is going to be a real game changer for both teams.

The board was notified that the board agenda for this meeting listed proposed board meetings for 2025.

The floor was opened for any questions, hearing none the next agenda item began.

CEO & Staff Report

The 15th Annual Breakfast with Champions was last Friday and had both Goalball National Teams and coaches in attendance. It was an opportunity to publicly share the news that the teams were moving to Colorado Springs. Local partners are interested to hear more about the program and have already contacted Molly regarding potential job opportunities for athletes. The 3rd Annual Ronald W. Plassman Gold Standard Award was presented by Matt Simpson and was awarded to Tyler Merren. The weekend also strengthened a partnership with Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (CSDB) and the team is working to finalize the 2025 Goalball Nationals to be held at the school. They have two goalball gyms which are required for the tournament. It felt really special to know that the students and faculty are looking forward to a fruitful partnership as our Paralympic programs make Colorado Springs home.

Staff are working behind the scenes so that all of the amenities and partnerships with the OPTC are finished so that when the USOPC grant agreement is received it can be signed immediately to start 2025. The OPTC walked us through the resident vs nonresident program, and it was an education for all in attendance. Staff would also like to report that Goalball Athletes Stipends from the USOPC have increased from 2024 to 2025.

Staff provided an update on the Blind Soccer program after the first international ranking tournament in November. The two countries in attendance were impressed by the athletes, the facilities and amenities provided at the Chula Vista training center. This was the first time our team had played on a regulation pitch with the rebound panels that the organization purchased that were manufactured here in the US. For 2025, the staff reported that the organization was able to increase the training days by 75% year over year. One of the goals for 2025 is to get the athletes qualified for EAHI and direct athlete stipends by year end.

The staff had an update on funding. We received notice yesterday that USABA was awarded a grant to help with further developing blind soccer in Colorado Springs. Google Pixel agreement was renewed for 2025. For the Ambassadors on this meeting, thank you for your continued support.



The staff provided a recommended organization structure to go along with the budget. One of the things learned during the NGB Recertification is that we're touching things multiple times throughout the process. There will be shift of roles and responsibilities in order to streamline the safety procedures, governance, and other administrative tasks.

The floor was opened for questions. A general conversation regarding the goalball staff positions opening ensued. Molly and staff worked with many board members and athlete board members regarding the positions and structure of the organization for 2025. It was determined that the focus for 2025 needed to shift to concentrate on the Paralympic sports and athletes. While revenue is spoken of a lot, the purpose is to provide for the priorities of the athletes and sports. The OPTC requires a resident coach for the program, which is why the position is shifting to a Goalball Team & Performance Manager rather than Sports Performance.

Committee Updates and Reports

Tracie Froster presented the Nominated and Governance Committee update. The committee has been searching for an attorney to sit on the Ethical & Judicial Committee for quite some time. The NGC has vetted Spencer Higgins nominee to the committee and would like to take this opportunity to have him appointed to the committee. Board chair, Mark Ackermann appointed Spencer to the Ethical & Judicial Committee.

The Nominating & Governance Committee (NGC) chair, Tracie Foster, shared that the board elections will take place at the December annual board meeting. There are four positions that are terming at the end of this year. Two (2) are at-large and currently held by Mark Ackermann and David Cohen. The independent director position currently held by Eve Wright-Taylor and the constituent position currently held by Jennifer Demby. It is noted that the NGC appoints the constituent board position, the board does not vote. The other three (3) positions will be voted on by the board. All four board members have renewed their interest in remaining on the board. There are new candidates that will also be presented to the board for consideration. Voting will be anonymous via text as it was in the prior election. Tracie will run the election, and it will be held in order starting with the independent position. The vote will be held then reported on. Following that it will be each of the two at-large positions that will be voted on and reported on individually. It will be anonymous and accessible.

Molly assisted Tracie in reporting that since the blind soccer national team participated in an international tournament, the eight (8) athletes are now considered 10-year athletes. The USOPC made an exception for blind soccer to allow them access to 10-year athlete status outside of the standard Worlds, ParaPan, and/or Paralympic Games requirement. The board was invited to attend a meeting with the attorney where the red lined recommendations to the bylaws and further discussions on 10-year athletes, board representation, gender equity and other issues will be discussed the week of Thanksgiving.

John Kusku gave the Ethics & Judicial Committee report. The Conflict of Interest (COI) forms from the board members are due November 29, 2024. He also reported on a long-standing grievance that has now been completed, the findings were delivered. A second grievance is outstanding but is coming to a close this week. It was also reported to the board that there is an Ethics & Judicial Committee On-Boarding Audio file that is available to be listened to.



Gary Remensnyder gave the Audit & Finance Committee report. 2024 Q3 Financial Review and Forecast were presented to the board. Actual revenue and expenses were reported on with updates to the forecast for the remainder of 2024. The balance sheet reported \$1.5 million in assets that cover liabilities of \$521k. Call to motion to accept and approve the 3rd Quarter Financial Statements. David Cohen moved the motion and Calahah Young seconded. The vote was called on the Q3 Financial Statements were unanimously approved.

The 2025 budget was presented to the board for approval. The staff were challenged to cut revenue to align with the pipeline and probability that staff provided as support to the budget. This provides a conservative approach to revenue. The budget was prepared to be a breakeven budget. Revenue is \$1.4 million, and expenses are budgeted to be \$1.4 million. Call to accept the 2025 Budget was made. Calahan Young motioned, and Eliana Mason seconded. The 2025 budget was approved unanimously.

Calahan Young and the internal Athlete Advisory Committee met mid-October where it was discussed that more consistent meetings were needed and initial thoughts on developing systems were discussed.

The bylaw working group reported a reminder that an email would be sent to board members to attend the meeting with the attorney to discuss and learn about the red line bylaws. There is a lot to review and a couple of areas we'd like to refine.

Approval of Minutes

Mark asked for approval of the May and September board meeting minutes. The motion was made by Gary Remensnyder and seconded by Eve Wright-Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting went into executive session at 6 p.m. MST.