

Minutes of Liberty League Winter Meeting January 20, 2017 – Gaylord Opryland Resort, Nashville, Tenn.

Present: Kris Hall, David Lindholm (Bard); Steve Yianoukos, Laurel Kane (Clarkson); Mike Hanna (Hobart); Susan Bassett, Michelle Manning, Will Rothermel (Ithaca), Lee McElroy (RPI); Andrea Golden (Rochester); Lou Spiotti, Scott McVean (RIT); Bob Durocher, Fran Grembowicz (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan, Nekisha Quinney (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin, Beth Tiffany (Union); Michelle Walsh, JoAnn Acquarulo (Vassar); Deb Steward (William Smith); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

Guests: Robert Flowers (Vice President for Student Affairs, Hobart & William Smith); Dr. Sandra Johnson (Senior Vice President for Student Affairs, RIT).

I. Call to Order

Steve Yianoukos (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

II. Review of Minutes

The minutes of the Sept. 13, 2016 meeting at Skidmore College were reviewed. Regarding item XI., Swimming & Diving Championship Format, on page 7 Kris Hall asked for clarification on the year in which the Liberty League Championship would switch from a fall semester to a spring semester championship. Tracy King confirmed that the championship would be conducted in the spring semester during the 2017-18 academic year (held in February 2018).

Motion: A motion (Steward, Hall) to approve the minutes from the September 13, 2016 meeting PASSED 11-0-0.

III. Financial Report

Mike Hanna reviewed the budget report for FY17. Hanna reminded the members that Liberty League full-member dues for FY18 and FY19 would be \$20,000 as agreed upon at the September 2016 meeting. The budget report dated Jan. 12, 2017, included in the meeting packet, shows FY17 expenses totaling \$79,810.34. Hanna noted that the invoice for SIDEARM Sports (Liberty League website) in the amount of \$2,000 has also been paid since the latest report. Transaction reports circulated by Hanna for calendar year 2016 will be submitted to the league's accountant in February for compilation of the New York State and Federal Income Tax returns.

Motion: A motion (Golden, Durocher) to approve the treasurer's report as presented by Mike Hanna PASSED 11-0-0.

IV. Commissioner's Report

- A. Men's Lacrosse Officiating Update:** Tracy King indicated that the United States Intercollegiate Lacrosse Association (USILA) will no longer be assigning officials in men's lacrosse following the spring 2017 season. The assigning process in men's lacrosse beginning in 2018 will shift to regional assigners similar to other sports like soccer and basketball. King indicated that conferences will be responsible for securing an assigner. Conferences in the same region, such as the Liberty League, Empire 8, SUNYAC and NEAC, may choose to utilize the same assigner.
- B. Liberty League Website Redesign:** King provided an update on the redesign of the Liberty League website through SIDEARM Sports, the league's website provider. King and Katie Meline solicited feedback through a number of SIDs in the league. The current design drafts incorporate SID feedback. Susan Bassett encouraged King to review the mobile website to ensure that it is user friendly and meets the league's needs. The league will review the mobile site prior to launching the redesigned website.
- C. NCAA Regional Rules Attendance:** Dates for NCAA Regional Rules Seminars were reviewed. Seminar dates this spring are May 15-17 (Indianapolis) and June 5-7 (San Diego). According to King's records, Hobart & William Smith, Rochester and Skidmore are due to attend a seminar this spring in order to satisfy Division III membership requirements. Institutions can be reimbursed for attendance through NCAA Conference Grant Tier I funds.

V. Review of NCAA Legislative Proposals

NCAA Legislative proposals were discussed and straw polls were taken to establish a league position for each proposal.

- **Proposal 1** – To specify that an active member institution shall: (1) establish an administrative structure that provides independent medical care and affirms the unchallengeable autonomous authority of primary athletics health care providers (team physicians and athletic trainers) to determine medical management and return-to-play decisions related to student-athletes; and (2) designate an athletics healthcare administrator to oversee the institution's athletic health care administration and delivery (10-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 2** – To permit a graduate student to participate in intercollegiate athletics at the institution of his or her choice (8-2-0, Support).
- **Proposal 3** – To amend the limitations of outside financial awards to preclude the donor of an outside aid award that considers athletics leadership, ability, participation or performance from restricting the recipient to attend a specific institution (10-0-0, Support).

- **Proposal 4** – To standardize annual contest and date of competition exemptions. Specifically, to allow each sport to exempt participation in the following: (1) conference championships; (2) season-ending tournament; and (3) two scrimmages, exhibitions or joint practices. Additionally, to allow the two scrimmages, exhibitions or joint practices to occur prior to the first permissible contest date in all sports other than wrestling (9-1-0, Support).
- **Proposal 5** – To allow field hockey and lacrosse teams to conduct an exempted scrimmage, exhibition or joint practice with outside competition prior to the first permissible contest or date of competition (9-1-0, Support).
- **Proposal 6** – To eliminate the requirement that the mandatory day off for track and field and swimming and diving programs be the same day for every student-athlete (8-1-1, Support).
- **Proposal 7** – To deregulate the tryout events and camps and clinics legislation to allow institutions to host or conduct events involving prospective student-athletes, provided those events are: (1) open to the public; and (2) do not offer free or reduced admission to prospective student-athletes (10-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 8** – To limit the total number of participants in the provisional or reclassifying membership program to not more than 12 institutions (10-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 9** – To eliminate the opportunity to reconsider and amendment following confirmation of an affirmative or negative vote on that amendment by the presiding officer (8-1-1, Support).

VI. Football Membership Discussion

Tracy King indicated that the league has explored many options to address its football membership issue resulting from the announced departure of associate members Merchant Marine, Springfield and WPI in April 2015. The Liberty League presidents discussed potential options via conference call on Dec. 9 before requesting that the full group of athletic administrators provide a recommendation. King stated that, while the presidents chose not to eliminate any options from consideration, there did not appear to be support for a full-member option at the present time. The options to address the issue appear to be limited to a SUNY institution as an associate member or a partnership with the four private institutions from the Empire 8 (Alfred, Hartwick, St. John Fisher, Utica). King reported that the football-playing institutions discussed options on a Dec. 9 conference call and expressed a preference for a single associate member rather than a partnership with a group of institutions. Mike Hanna had proposed Buffalo State as a potential associate member as many schools recruit in western New York and have large alumni bases in the area. Hanna contacted Buffalo State AD and football coach Jerry Boyes who expressed a willingness to explore a potential arrangement with the Liberty League. Susan Bassett also reported speaking to Boyes and reiterated that Buffalo State and the Empire 8 expressed a desire for the conferences to establish a scheduling arrangement.

Motion: A motion (Hanna, McElroy) to recommend Buffalo State College for Liberty League associate membership in football beginning with the 2019 season PASSED 11-0-0.

King will forward the recommendation to the Liberty League member presidents for their consideration and vote.

VII. Golf Associate Membership Inquiries

Tracy King shared that the athletic directors from Babson (men's golf) and Marywood (women's golf) had reached out to the league to express interest in Liberty League associate memberships in golf. In 2017-18, the Liberty League will have seven participating institutions in men's golf, including associate member NYU. The league will have eight participating institutions in women's golf, including associate members Mount Holyoke, NYU and Wellesley. The Liberty League currently has NCAA automatic qualification in both sports; additional members would not enhance the league's AQ status in either sport. There was no interest expressed in further exploring Babson or Marywood as associate members. King will respond accordingly to the institutions, thanking them for their interest.

VIII. League Championship Expansion

Based on the league's decision in June 2016 to consider expanding tournaments from four to six teams in sports where sponsorship exceeds eight teams (nine or more sponsoring teams), sport groups were asked to recommend formats for expanded tournaments. Expanded tournament proposals were as follows:

- A. Men's & Women's Soccer:** Beth Tiffany reported that the soccer coaches were evenly split on three potential tournament models: 1) Monday-Thursday-Sunday; 2.) Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday; 3.) retaining the current four-team tournament format of Wednesday-Saturday. Moving to a format of Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday would necessitate moving the start of league play a week earlier.
- B. Men's & Women's Basketball:** Tracy King related that Brian Miller polled the basketball coaches and determined the group favored a Tuesday-Friday-Sunday format with the higher seeds hosting each round. The basketball coaches desired to retain a format where the higher-seeded team hosts the championship game, which resulted in the best championship atmosphere.
- C. Women's Lacrosse:** Laurel Kane reported that the women's lacrosse coaches are proposing a Tuesday-Friday-Sunday format with the higher seeds hosting each round. The coaches proposed night games for Tuesday and Friday night as all teams have lighted game fields. The coaches felt that a Tuesday-Saturday-Sunday format would be acceptable, but not their preferred choice.
- D. Men's Lacrosse:** Gail Cummings-Danson reported that the men's lacrosse coaches favored a format of Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday with the final regular-season game being moved to the Wednesday preceding the tournament. Men's lacrosse does not play in a back-to-back format, either in

Liberty League play or in the NCAA tournament. The NCAA tournament also utilizes a Wednesday-Saturday format throughout the tournament.

- E. **Men's & Women's Tennis:** Tracy King reported that Fran Grembowicz has agreed to take over as liaison for men's and women's tennis, replacing Mike Howard. King also reported that the tennis coaches favored a format of Friday-Saturday-Sunday at one site. Teams are currently playing either Friday-Saturday or Saturday-Sunday depending on gender. The coaches would also prefer to continue conducting the championship outdoors, if possible. The Friday-Saturday-Sunday format is consistent with the NCAA tournament.

With the various proposed formats, concerns were expressed with student-athletes potentially missing two class days in the same week. In deciding on tournament formats, league scheduling principles should be considered. Modeling tournaments after current NCAA championship formats should also be a consideration. Basketball, soccer and women's lacrosse all currently utilize back-to-back formats for NCAA tournament play. It was agreed that if sport groups wish to consider expanded tournament formats, three options should be presented for their consideration: 1.) Tuesday-Saturday-Sunday; 2.) Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday; 3.) no tournament expansion. If the sport group prefers a Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday format, the group should also present a revised schedule for consideration. Sport liaisons will take the information back and survey their respective sport groups. Liaisons will report back in four weeks and a conference call with the administrators will be scheduled to discuss the proposals.

IX. Proposed Baseball Schedule

Jim McLaughlin reviewed the scheduling recommendations from the September 16 baseball coaches' conference call. For all league weekends, the coaches proposed three-game sets with one game Saturday and two games Sunday, which would allow teams to travel on Saturday. Teams would continue to have the flexibility to adjust the schedule as needed due to weather (e.g., moving games up to Friday or playing two games Saturday). The coaches recommended that all three games are scheduled as 9-inning games. If the first game on Sunday goes extra innings, then the second game would default to seven innings. With the current policy, teams would be required to complete two games against all teams.

McLaughlin suggested that instead of three 9-inning games, the league might consider a format of 9-7-9 with the Sunday doubleheader consisting of a 7-inning game followed by a 9-inning game, which is the current format for a league doubleheader. If the first game goes extra innings, the second game defaults to seven innings. Playing two 9-inning games extends the Sunday for the student-athletes and the host institution's staff. The traveling team will also return to campus later than it would under the current format.

Motion: A motion (McLaughlin, Durocher) to approve the proposed 2019-2023 two-division baseball schedule with 3-game sets against all scheduled opponents, with one game Saturday and two games Sunday, adjusting the innings for the scheduled games to 9-7-9, PASSED 9-1-1.

X. Revised Softball Schedule

Tracy King reviewed a scheduling concern expressed by the softball coaches at their October 19 meeting. With the schedule approved for 2019-2021, teams are scheduled to play two league doubleheaders in the final weekend prior to the league tournament, which starts on Thursday. There was concern that if weather forced the postponement or cancellation of games on the final weekend, teams could have difficulty completing their league schedules prior to the tournament. Incomplete schedules could have a significant impact on the qualification and seeding for the league tournament. To alleviate the scheduling concern, it was suggested that the weekend in which teams are scheduled to play only one league doubleheader could be moved to the final weekend of the season. This would provide teams with the flexibility to reschedule one opponent over the final weekend in the event of inclement weather.

Motion: A motion (Yianoukos, McElroy) to approve the revised softball schedule for 2019-2021 PASSED 8-0-3.

XIV. Future Meeting Dates

Dates for the Liberty League spring meeting are May 31-June 1 at the Otesaga Resort Hotel in Cooperstown, N.Y.

XVI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.