

# **Minutes of Liberty League Winter Meeting January 24, 2020 – Anaheim, Calif. (NCAA Convention)**

**Present:** Kris Hall (Bard); Laurel Kane (Clarkson); Deb Steward, Brian Miller (Hobart & William Smith); Susan Bassett, Erienne Roberts, Will Rothermel (Ithaca); Lee McElroy (RPI); Kristine Shanley (Rochester); Scott McVean (RIT); Bob Durocher, Fran Grembowicz (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin (Union); Michelle Walsh, Kaitlin Leach (Vassar); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

**Guests:** Chuck Brown, Division III Management Council (FAR, Penn State-Behrend); Annie MacMillan, National SAAC Associate Member (Vassar).

## **I. Call to Order**

Susan Bassett (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

## **II. Review of Minutes**

The minutes of the September 24, 2019, meeting at Turning Stone in Verona, N.Y., and the November 21, 2019, conference call were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

**Motion:** A motion (Hall, Steward) to approve the minutes from the September 24, 2019, meeting and November 21, 2019, conference call PASSED 11-0-0.

## **III. Financial Report**

Liberty League commissioner Tracy King provided a review of the financial report for FY20. The league has a current bank balance of \$357,244.44. Revenues total \$300,404.94 and current expenses total \$108,903.36. Associate member dues (\$250) need to be collected from Mount Holyoke College for women's golf.

King indicated that the bulk of remaining expenditures include salaries and benefits along with conference grant disbursements, which will be distributed in June. Also, the league recently paid a past-due invoice from SIDEARM Sports (Liberty League website) for FY19. SIDEARM had mistakenly emailed the invoice to former Liberty League treasurer Mike Hanna (retired). As a result, the expense line for 'Website design & host' will be double what has been budgeted for FY20.

**Motion:** A motion (McElroy, McLaughlin) to approve the budget report dated January 14, 2020, PASSED 11-0-0.

## **IV. Commissioner's Report**

- A. National SAAC Liaison:** With the Liberty League eligible to appoint a student-athlete to serve on the Division III National SAAC, King had solicited nominations. Student-athletes from Bard, Hobart, Ithaca, RIT, St. Lawrence, Vassar and William Smith expressed interest in representing the Liberty League on the National SAAC. The NCAA has established a deadline of Jan. 27 and will select a representative based on the composition needs (gender, ethnicity, sport season) of the committee.
- B. Baseball Bat Testing:** Baseball and softball bat testing will be implemented in Division III beginning with the spring 2021 season. Bat testing will be required prior to each single game or each series. The testing must be performed by an administrator – not a member of the coaching staff. Schools should budget accordingly as the cost of the baseball bat testing equipment is approximately \$1,500. A question was raised as to which team is responsible for bat testing for neutral-site games (i.e., spring break games). King will seek clarification on the testing procedure for neutral-site games.
- C. National Review of Collegiate Officiating:** King shared that the NCAA has engaged *The Pictor Group* to lead a national review of the state of collegiate officiating across 15 sports. The over-arching goal is to identify general as well as divisional issues that are affecting NCAA sports as a result of the decline of the officiating pool and to present strategic recommendations to meet the officiating needs of the membership. A final report to the NCAA is anticipated in August 2020.

## V. NCAA / National Issues

- A. Discussion/Vote on 2020 NCAA Legislative Proposals:** NCAA Legislative proposals were discussed and straw polls were taken to establish a league position for each proposal.
- **Proposal 1 – Athletics Diversity & Inclusion Designee:** to specify that an active member institution or conference shall designate an athletics diversity and inclusion designee (11-0-0, Support).
  - **Proposal 2 – Reduce Provisional Waiting Period:** to amend legislation related to the Division III provisional process to reduce the provisional process from four years to three (11-0-0, Support).
  - **Proposal 3 – Reduce Reclassifying Waiting Period:** to amend legislation related to the Division III reclassifying process to reduce the number of years in the reclassifying process from four years to three (11-0-0, Support).
  - **Proposal 4 – Snacks & Nutritional Supplements:** to specify that an institution may provide snacks and permissible nutritional supplements to student-athletes as a benefit incidental to participation (9-2-0, Support).

- **Proposal 5 – Golf & Swimming Practice Expenses:** to allow an institution to provide practice expenses in the sports of Golf and Swimming & Diving during an official vacation period, regardless of location (7-4-0, Support).
- **Proposal 5-1 – Practice Expenses for Golf Only:** to allow an institution to provide practice expenses in the sport of Golf during an official vacation period, regardless of location (10-0-1, Support).
- **Proposal 6 – Leadership Programming:** to allow student-athletes serving in a team leadership capacity to voluntarily participate in leadership programming involving general, athletics-related content or information outside of the declared playing season with any member of an institution’s coaching staff (3-7-1, Oppose).
- **Proposal 7 – Emerging Sports for Women – Equestrian:** to add equestrian as an emerging sport for women and establish legislation related to playing and practice seasons and membership (0-10-1, Oppose).
- **Proposal 8 – Emerging Sports for Women – Acrobatics & Tumbling:** to add acrobatics and tumbling as an emerging sport for women and establish legislation related to playing and practice seasons and membership (5-0-6, Support).
- **Proposal 9 – Emerging Sports for Women – Wrestling:** to add wrestling as an emerging sport for women and establish legislation related to playing and practice seasons and membership (10-0-1, Support).
- **Proposal 10 – Provisional/Reclassifying Members:** to specify that institutions in years three and four of the NCAA Division III provisional and reclassifying membership process may count towards the requisite seven institutions necessary to comprise a conference (9-2-0, Support).
- **Proposal 11 – Sport Classified in Division I:** to permit Division III member institutions with Division I sports to apply all Division I legislation, except for Bylaw 15 (financial aid) to the Division I sports (11-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 12 – Resolution – Softball & Baseball Championship Timing:** to direct the Division III Softball and Baseball Committees, in conjunction with the Division III Championships Committee, to collaborate on a plan to address the timing of the tournament schedules (11-0-0, Support).

**B. National SAAC Update:** National SAAC associate member Annie MacMillan, a former women’s volleyball student-athlete from Vassar College, joined the meeting and updated the league on SAAC initiatives and also shared the committee’s positions on the NCAA legislative proposals. National SAAC has identified three initiatives for the upcoming year: 1.) Sustainability and sustainable practices in athletics; 2.) Special Olympics partnership – increasing participation and reporting; 3.) Inclusion Working Group –

development of a Domestic Assault and Prevention Resource Guide. Regarding Division III legislation, MacMillan reported that National SAAC supports all legislative proposals. SAAC was split on Proposal 6 (Leadership Programming) with concerns centering on voluntary participation versus required and how it would be monitored.

- C. **Management Council Update:** Chuck Brown, FAR at Penn State Behrend, joined the meeting and shared an update on behalf of the Division III Management Council. Brown reported that Michelle Walsh has been appointed to Management Council and will serve as the Liberty League liaison moving forward. Regarding the Arrington Concussion Settlement, concussion reporting from institutions to the NCAA will be required on an annual basis. The NCAA is developing a reporting process that will begin in May, but more information will be forthcoming. Brown shared a discussion from the joint breakfast with SAAC, Management Council and Presidents Council in which student-athletes estimated that between 40 and 50 percent of student-athletes engaged in vaping, which is a growing health concern on campuses.
- D. **Name-Image-Likeness Developments:** Recent developments on the NCAA's Name-Image-Likeness issue were discussed. Individuals have been increasingly utilizing social media platforms as a means to generate revenue. There are opportunities that now exist that may not have existed in the past. Talented music students may utilize their abilities to provide lessons. Should the same opportunities be afforded to student-athletes? State and national legislation may dictate the direction of NCAA legislation.
- E. **Arrington Concussion Lawsuit Settlement:** Walsh shared that the athletic trainers discussed the impact of the Arrington settlement on campuses on their annual conference call, Jan. 8. Many institutions are working with campus legal counsel to address the settlement requirements. There are several elements: 1.) return to play determined by a physician, not a physician's designee; 2.) annual baseline testing; 3.) availability of athletic training staff for practices vs. present for competitions – what is considered *available*. Brian Miller indicated that legal counsel will want to review department concussion management policies to ensure that all requirements of the settlement are included in the policies so institutions are in compliance.

## VI. League Governance

- A. **Cost Containment Initiatives:** Bassett indicated that her institution's chief financial officer is exploring ways on campus to consolidate services and reduce expenses. As an example, Bassett shared that Ithaca is currently spending over \$20,000 on video exchange and related services. From a league-wide perspective, are there ways in which costs can be reduced or

controlled while still providing for a positive student-athlete experience? Is it possible to discern what is a luxury to have versus what is a necessity? Potential avenues to explore include scheduling and time adjustments, roster and contest limits, and video exchange services. Jim McLaughlin, Deb Steward and Kaitlin Leach agreed to serve on a league subcommittee along with Bassett to explore potential ways to control costs. King will coordinate a conference call with the committee.

- B. Nondiscrimination Policy:** As a follow-up to the Liberty League fall meeting, Bassett drafted a revised nondiscrimination policy that she shared with the league members. Kris Hall proposed amendments below indicated in ***bold italics*** type. The proposed policy will be posted on the Liberty League website and included within the Policies & Procedures Manual.

“Diversity, equity and inclusion are essential to the fulfillment of the Liberty League’s mission. We value inclusive excellence in all aspects of Liberty League operations and programs. The framework for our commitment to diversity and inclusion lives within our active prohibition of discrimination in our policies, employment, events and programs on the basis of race, age, class, creed, gender, gender expression, gender identity, educational background, disability, income, marital status, national origin, parental status, religion, sex, sexual orientation, work experiences, veteran status and all classifications protected by law. We are deeply committed to promoting and maintaining a civil ~~community~~ ***communities*** that facilitates opportunities for shared understanding of individual and collective truths. Moreover, we resolve to create and uphold a ~~community~~ ***communities*** that ***are*** respectful of all persons.

***Inquiries or complaints regarding any form of discrimination or harassment may be directed to:”***

**Motion:** A motion (Cummings-Danson, Steward) to adopt the proposed Liberty League Nondiscrimination Policy as amended PASSED 11-0-0.

- C. League Diversity and Inclusion Policies:** Hall suggested that the Liberty League website could be enhanced to include sections and links on diversity and inclusion policies. Hall noted that the NESCAC has a page on its website under the “Inside the NESCAC” link that provides various links to student-athlete services. King will review the page for possible additions to the Liberty League website. Also, a question was raised regarding Convention Proposal 2020-1 and whether the Liberty League is required to designate a diversity and inclusion officer for the conference. King will seek clarification on the proposal and will share with the league if it is a requirement.
- D. League Acclimatization Rules:** Walsh shared that the Liberty League athletic trainers discussed on their conference call the concept of developing

preseason acclimatization rules for fall sports other than football. Walsh had indicated to the athletic trainers that she would gauge the interest of the administrators in developing league-specific acclimatization rules. King noted that a proposal from the 2019 NCAA Convention to establish an acclimatization period for field hockey and soccer had been referred to the Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports (CSMAS) for further study and review, but it was unclear if there had been any outcome or resolution. Walsh will seek clarification in her new role on the Management Council and will report back to the league.

- E. **League Benchmarking Study:** King briefly reviewed the results of a Liberty League benchmarking study that had been compiled based on current staffing for athletic departments of league members. Each institution submitted FTE staffing data, updating a document that had been initially compiled approximately 10 years ago. A summary page provided a comparison of administrative and coaching positions for all 11 institutions. King noted that some schools may have added positions (e.g., strength and conditioning coach) since the original survey, but may not have added those positions to the updated Excel document. Some schools included volunteer coaches while others only included paid staff. Some schools listed part-time employees as 'PT' while others listed part-time employees as a percentage of FTE, such as 0.25. Some schools listed all sports while others listed Liberty League sports only. If the document is updated in the future, King will provide better direction to ensure more consistent data.

## VII. League Championships / Scheduling / Sport Issues

- A. **League Volleyball Assignor:** Hall shared a discussion from the Jan. 9 meeting of the Liberty League volleyball coaches in which the coaches expressed strong concerns with league officiating assignor Mara Wager. Among the concerns expressed were late assignments (match assignments completed in August), last-minute requests for hotel rooms for officials, and delayed email communication. The coaches were seeking approval to release Wager as league assignor and utilize a different assignor for the upcoming season. Wager has assigned volleyball officials for the last two years. Her original proposal to the league was for three years. King indicated that recent concerns expressed by the coaches had not previously been shared with Wager, although she attended the coaches meeting in January 2019 and addressed concerns from the group. Since Wager has not previously been made aware of concerns, the administrators agreed that she should be given an opportunity to address any issues before the league seeks to move in a different direction. King and Hall will schedule a call with Wager to address coaches' concerns and develop a plan moving forward.
- B. **Track & Field Entry Fees:** As a follow-up to a 2018 proposal from the track and field coaches to charge an entry fee for Liberty League cross country and

track and field championships, King compiled two years' worth of data comparing the costs of participating teams with the cost of the host institutions. Data indicated that the costs of the participating teams are generally greater than the costs of the host institutions. Based on the research, there was no interest in implementing entry fees for the Liberty League cross country and track and field championships.

- C. Draft Schedules – Football, Field Hockey, Men’s Lacrosse, Volleyball:** King reviewed proposed draft schedules for football, field hockey, men’s lacrosse and volleyball to solicit feedback on the schedule formats. The formats of the draft schedules in each of the four sports follow the existing formats while rotating the order of opponents. The football schedule has not been shared with the coaches while the other schedules have been shared with the respective coaching groups. There were no concerns expressed by the coaches in field hockey, lacrosse and volleyball. Michelle Walsh raised the possibility of shifting the field hockey schedule from a Friday-Sunday format to a Friday-Saturday format, consistent with league schedules in soccer, basketball and women’s lacrosse. A shift to Friday-Saturday would lessen the burden on support staff and would provide student-athletes with an off day on Sunday. King will draft a Friday-Sunday schedule and will circulate it to the administrators for review. It was noted that Saturday play could result in potential facility conflicts for institutions that utilize the same field for both field hockey and football.

**Motion:** A motion (Hall, Durocher) to adopt the proposed Liberty League volleyball schedule for 2021 to 2024, PASSED 8-0-3.

**Motion:** A motion (Cummings-Danson, Durocher) to adopt the proposed Liberty League men’s lacrosse schedule for 2022 to 2025, PASSED 9-0-2.

## **VIII. Future Meeting Sites / Dates**

- A. Spring Meeting:** May 27-28, 2020, at Syracuse Marriott Downtown.
- B. Future Meeting Sites / Dates:** The 2020 Liberty League fall meeting will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2020, in the Utica area. It was agreed that the 2021 spring meeting would be held in Schenectady, hosted by Union College, June 2-3, 2021 (the Wednesday-Thursday immediately following Memorial Day).

## **IX. Adjournment**

*Meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.*