

# **Minutes of Liberty League Winter Meeting January 11, 2022 – Zoom Video Conference**

**Present:** David Lindholm, Stefanie Carrington (Bard); Scott Smalling, Laurel Kane (Clarkson); Brian Miller, Liz Dennison, Chris Gray (Hobart and William Smith); Susan Bassett, Erienne Roberts, Will Rothermel (Ithaca); Lee McElroy, Karen Hansen, Kevin Beattie (RPI); George VanderZwaag, Kristine Shanley (Rochester); Jackie Nicholson, Scott McVean, Amy Reed (RIT); Bob Durocher, Randy LaBrake, Fran Grembowicz (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin, Joanne Little, Beth Tiffany (Union); Michelle Walsh, JoAnn Acquarulo, Kaitlin Leach (Vassar); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

## **I. Call to Order**

Lee McElroy (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. Tracy King welcomed new administrators Liz Dennison and Chris Gray (Hobart and William Smith).

## **II. Review of Minutes**

The minutes of the September 28, 2021, administrator Zoom meeting and the July 13, 2021 – January 4, 2022 weekly athletic director meetings were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

**Motion:** A motion (McLaughlin, Cummings-Danson) to approve the minutes from the September 28, 2021, meeting and July 13, 2021 – January 4, 2022 weekly meetings PASSED 11-0-0.

## **III. Financial Report**

King provided an overview of the financial report for FY22. The current Liberty League checking account balance totals \$328,317.72. The league's certificate of deposit (CD), which has a balance of \$52,047.07, automatically renewed in October for an additional 18 months. Prices for awards have increased slightly as awards vendors have passed cost increases from their suppliers on to customers. There have been no other unbudgeted expenses.

King indicated that league was selected for an audit of its workers' compensation insurance premium by the New York Compensation Insurance Rating Board (NYCIRB). The league was required to provide documentation including payroll reports and employee job descriptions in order to determine whether the workers' compensation policies were appropriate or needed to be adjusted.

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

- A. **NCAA Division III Presidents Council:** Hobart and William Smith Colleges president Joyce Jacobsen has agreed to join the NCAA Division III Presidents Council in July following the retirement of a current member. President Jacobsen has served as the league's representative on the Division III Presidents and Chancellors Advisory Group (PAG) for the past year.
- B. **Baseball Bat Testing:** Baseball and softball bat testing will be implemented in Division III beginning with the spring 2021 season. Institutions must have purchased the necessary testing equipment. Testing is required prior to each game or series. It is unclear whether an individual other than a coach is required to conduct the testing. King will seek clarification [Note: the NCAA confirmed that bat testing can be conducted by any individual other than a student-athlete].

## V. NCAA / National Issues

- A. **NCAA Medical Advisory Group Update:** Updated guidance from the NCAA Medical Advisory Group was reviewed and discussed. According to the guidance released January 6, the NCAA has revised its definition of "fully vaccinated," which now includes individuals within five months of completing the Pfizer/Moderna two-vaccine series or within two months of receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Individuals who have received a booster shot or have had a documented COVID-19 case in the past 90 days are also considered fully vaccinated. The concern with the change in the NCAA's definition of fully vaccinated is how it might impact the Liberty League's testing policy. Under the policy, all individuals who are not fully vaccinated need to be tested in accordance with NCAA guidelines. While most league institutions are mandating booster shots, some individuals may have originally been vaccinated more than five months ago. As a result, these individuals are not considered to be fully vaccinated and would be subjected to the weekly testing requirement. Additional on-campus testing might overwhelm campus health centers. Also, while the return-to-play guidelines have been amended by the NCAA, institutions are required to comply with county regulations, which may differ from county to county [Note: the NCAA Medical Advisory Group issued updated guidance January 14 in which the definition of fully vaccinated included all individuals who have received two doses of the Pfizer/Moderna vaccines in the last five months or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in the past two months. Individuals who have yet to receive a booster shot are considered "fully vaccinated and booster eligible" while those who have received a booster shot are considered "fully vaccinated and up-to-date." As a result of the change, the league policy of testing individuals weekly who are unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated does not need to be revised.]
- B. **Management Council Update:** Michelle Walsh provided an update on behalf of the Management Council. The vote on the new NCAA Constitution will be

conducted on Thursday, January 20. If the membership votes to approve the constitution, Division III will immediately conduct a business session to vote on a resolution to establish steps to review and revise divisional bylaws and policies. A Division III Advisory will be established to recommend changes. In a straw poll conducted on the proposed NCAA Constitution, Liberty League members voted in support, 11-0.

**C. Discussion/Vote on 2022 NCAA Legislative Proposals:** NCAA Legislative proposals were discussed and straw polls were taken to establish a league position for each proposal.

- **Proposal 1 – Legislative Authority – Emergency Legislation:** to permit the Division III Presidents Council to sponsor and adopt emergency legislation under defined circumstances (11-0-0, Support).
- **Proposal 2 – Requiring Eligibility Center for International Students:** to utilize the NCAA Eligibility Center in certifying amateur status of international student-athletes to provide more consistency and efficiency to the certification process (8-3, Support).
- **Proposal 3 – Minimum Participation to Trigger Use of Season:** to specify that a student-athlete would be charged with a season of eligibility if the student-athlete competes at any point during the traditional season (8-3, Support).
- **Proposal 4 – Applying Division I Financial Aid Legislation:** to permit Division III member institutions with Division I sports to apply all Division I legislation, including Bylaw 15 (financial aid) to the Division I sports (9-0-2, Support).
- **Proposal 5 – Reduce the Conference AQ Minimum:** to reduce the minimum number of conference members required for automatic qualification for Division III championships from seven to six (6-5-0, Support).
- **Proposal 6 – Single Sport Conference AQ Threshold:** to reduce the minimum number of member institutions required to form a single-sport conference from seven to six (5-6-0, Oppose).
- **Proposal 7 – Football Practice Season Modifications:** to specify permissible contact opportunities and equipment use for the football preseason, regular season and spring period (4-3-5, Support – includes Buffalo State).
- **Proposal 8 – Equestrian as an Emerging Sport:** to add equestrian as an emerging sport for women and to establish legislation related to playing and practice seasons and membership (0-10-1, Oppose).
- **Proposal 9 – Eliminate the Waiver for Sickle Cell Test:** to eliminate the option for a student-athlete to sign a waiver declining the sickle cell solubility test (10-0-1, Support).

## **VI. League Championships / Scheduling / Sport Issues**

- A. **Basketball Tournament Qualification:** With the COVID-19 Omicron variant impacting sports at all levels, King suggested the league may want to revisit its tournament qualification policy for basketball. The league agreed January 4 that if games were cancelled due to COVID-19 issues and were not able to be rescheduled, those games would be considered no-contests. As a result, some teams might play fewer games than others. In order to be eligible for league championship participation in the spring of 2021, teams were required to complete 51 percent of the average number of league games played. The standard resulted in some teams qualifying for league tournaments while playing less than half of their scheduled games. The athletic directors agreed to reconvene Wednesday, January 12, at noon to revisit the tournament qualification standards.
  
- B. **2023-2028 Baseball Draft Schedule:** With the addition of Hobart baseball to the Liberty League in the spring of 2023, a new league baseball schedule was needed. The baseball coaches have proposed a two-division format in which teams will play three games against all division opponents in addition to a crossover weekend in which they will play two doubleheaders against teams from the other division. The proposed schedule is similar to the current divisional model except that one division has six teams and the other has five teams (current schedule has five teams in each division) and the number of crossover weekends has been reduced from two to one. The proposed postseason structure remains the same.

**Motion:** A motion (VanderZwaag, McElroy) to adopt the proposed 2023-2028 Liberty League baseball schedule PASSED 11-0-0.

- C. **Future League Championship Formats:** Interest was expressed during the November 9 weekly athletic director meeting in revisiting Liberty League championship formats, particularly four-team sites hosted Saturday and Sunday by the top-seeded institution. In instances in which the host institution is eliminated in the semifinals, the championship experience for the student-athletes can be diminished while playing in a neutral venue with few spectators. It was agreed that an ad-hoc committee will be formed to review options and make possible recommendations to be considered at the league's spring meeting.

## VII. Future Meeting Dates

- A. **Weekly Meetings:** Given the emergence of the COVID-19 Omicron variant, the athletic directors agreed to continue their weekly Zoom meetings.
  
- B. **Spring Meeting:** A location and format for the spring meeting was discussed. While there is a preference for a two-day in-person meeting, it was agreed

that, given the current COVID conditions, a decision on the meeting format would be delayed until a later date.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

*Ithaca College associate athletic director Will Rothermel was congratulated on his recent appointment as Associate Vice President and Chief Athletics and Recreation Officer at St. Joseph's College (Maine). Meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.*