

Minutes of Liberty League Spring Meeting June 1-2, 2022 – The Landing Hotel – Schenectady, N.Y.

Present: David Lindholm, Stefanie Carrington (Bard); Scott Smalling, Laurel Kane (Clarkson); Brian Miller, Chris Gray (Hobart and William Smith); Susan Bassett (Ithaca); Lee McElroy, Kevin Beattie, Karen Hansen (RPI); Kristine Shanley, Morgan Stout (Rochester); Jackie Nicholson, Scott McVean (RIT); Bob Durocher, Fran Grembowicz (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin, Beth Tiffany (Union); Michelle Walsh, JoAnn Acquarulo (Vassar); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

I. Call to Order

Lee McElroy (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

II. Review of Minutes

The minutes of the January 11, 2022, Zoom meeting were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

Motion: A motion (McElroy, Durocher) to approve the minutes from the January 11, 2022, meeting was APPROVED 11-0-0.

III. Financial Report

- A. FY22 Budget Report:** Tracy King reviewed the financial report. A budget deficit of approximately \$28,400 had been projected due to the reduction in full-member dues to \$15,000 as a two-year COVID relief measure. King projected the actual deficit to be approximately \$34,000 for the year. Three primary factors – first, the organization’s financial review by the accounting firm for Form 990 costs \$3,000. The FY20 review was completed in August 2021 while the FY21 review was completed in May 2022, so both reviews will be paid from the FY22 budget (\$6,000 as opposed to \$3,000). Second, the insurance premiums, primarily workers comp, increased more than anticipated. Third budgeted expenses for travel and awards were more than projected due to inflation.
- B. FY23 Proposed Budget:** The proposed budget is based on the restoration of full-member dues to \$20,000. Budgeted revenues are \$301,250 and budgeted expenses are \$296,900, for a surplus of just under \$5,000. Budgeted revenues are flat from FY20. Budgeted expenses are similar to FY19/FY20 aside from increases in insurance/salaries/benefits. Proposed dues for FY24

will be presented at the league's January meeting so institutions can budget accordingly for potential increases.

Motion: A motion (Miller, Cummings-Danson) to approve the FY23 budget with full member dues of \$20,000 was APPROVED 11-0-0.

- C. **Treasurer:** George VanderZwaag has assumed the duties of treasurer, replacing Deb Steward, and has signed paperwork with Five Star Bank to have account access and check writing privileges.

IV. Commissioner's Update

- A. **Recap of 2021-22 Champions / League Success:** Katie Meline reviewed a document highlighting the academic and athletic accomplishments of Liberty League student-athletes and teams during the past academic year. Five Liberty League teams – RPI (football and men's basketball), William Smith (women's soccer), RIT (men's lacrosse), Union (men's lacrosse) – reached at least the quarterfinals in NCAA competition. RIT captured its second consecutive national championship in men's lacrosse, defeating Union in the first matchup of conference opponents in the history of the Division III men's lacrosse championship. Nine different institutions captured Liberty League championships. Additionally, a total of 2,275 student-athletes qualified for the Liberty League All-Academic Teams (3.30 cumulative GPA or higher) in their respective sports – the highest number in the league's history.
- B. **Report on Hardship Waivers Granted:** King reported that a total of six hardship waivers have been granted during the 2021-22 academic year. All six were from men's sports – soccer, football and basketball. The number of hardship waiver requests submitted has decreased significantly since 2019-20 when 27 waivers were granted. The decrease is likely due to the extra season of eligibility the NCAA has granted due to COVID-19.
- C. **NCAA Woman of the Year / Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year:** NCAA Woman of the Year nominees must be submitted via the NCAA online portal by June 21. King will conduct an email vote for the Liberty League Male and Female Scholar-Athletes of the Year. These awards are presented to graduating seniors who have demonstrated excellence in academics, athletics and leadership/service. The individual selected as Liberty League Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year will be the league's nominee for the NCAA Woman of the Year award.

V. League Championship Philosophy / Structure

King presented the report of a five-person ad hoc committee (Susan Bassett, Laurel Kane, David Lindholm, Michelle Walsh, King) that was charged with reviewing the Liberty

League's current championship structure including bracket size, bracket format and quality of participation experience.

Under the current league policy, round-robin sports with nine or more participating teams have a tournament bracket size of six teams while sports with eight or fewer teams have a bracket size of four teams. Championship access ratios in those sports vary from 50 percent (four of eight teams in field hockey, men's lacrosse, softball) to 67 percent (six of nine teams in tennis). Men's lacrosse previously had a six-team championship with nine sponsoring teams, but when Bard discontinued its program, the bracket size was reduced to a four-team championship. Per league policy, the reduction of one team resulted in the loss of two tournament spots. The committee supported an access ratio of 60 percent, which would allow proportional access across all sports, similar to how Division III championship bracket sizes are determined.

The committee also reviewed bracket formats. The league utilizes several different tournament formats, including Wednesday-Saturday (field hockey, men's lacrosse), Tuesday-Saturday-Sunday (soccer, basketball, women's lacrosse), Thursday-Friday-Saturday (baseball, softball) and Friday-Saturday-Sunday (tennis). The committee considered moving away from championship games on Sundays as a way to protect teams advancing to the NCAA championships, but doing so may further compress tournament formats. The committee was receptive to exploring alternative formats, but cost containment will be an important factor.

Regarding the student-athlete experience, the committee discussed how championship games played at the site of the higher-seeded team have been a more positive experience than neutral-site championship games. While the league has often followed the format of NCAA championships, it was noted that the NCAA is considering moving away from back-to-back championship weekends in certain sports.

Options for bracket size were discussed. While a 60 percent access ratio may create more proportional access in round-robin sports, it could potentially create odd bracket sizes, like five teams in field hockey and men's lacrosse and seven teams in women's lacrosse. In softball, a five-team double-elimination bracket could potentially expand the length of the tournament. Utilizing a standard bracket size of six teams in all sports with eight teams in baseball and women's lacrosse (two sports with 11 sponsoring teams) was considered. But this format would result in different access ratios in different sports (e.g., 75 percent in field hockey; 60 percent in soccer), a concern with the current policy. The topic was tabled until the following day for further consideration and discussion.

VI. Review of Sport & Committee Reports

- A. Single-Site Championship Dates and Host Rotation:** King reviewed the single-site championship dates and sites for 2022-23. The cross country championship site had been shifted from St. Lawrence to Vassar at the request of St. Lawrence, which is also hosting an NCAA regional. The tennis championships are scheduled for one week earlier due to a one-year shift in

the NCAA championship schedule. The sites of the men's and women's golf championships are still being determined as the coaches are evaluating alternatives to Turning Stone.

B. Sport / Committee Liaison Responsibilities – Field Hockey: With Joanne Little retiring from Union, a new committee liaison will need to be identified for field hockey. Gail Cummings-Danson agreed to serve as field hockey liaison.

C. Reports from Sport Groups:

1. **Field Hockey:** Discussion items: 1.) The National Field Hockey Coaches Association (NFHCA) requested that the number of field hockey balls available to both the host and visiting teams during pregame warmups is increased from 50 per team to 75 per team (150 total). The coaches were supportive of the request and had the resources to comply with the recommendation. 2.) Officiating was discussed. The league has agreed to continue with Julie Clark as assigner for the 2022 season. If a coach does not wish to have an official assigned to their games, the assigner must be supplied with this information before assignments have been made. Clark will be implementing an online evaluation tool for officials to complete after each game. The coaches also developed a list of preferred officials for Liberty League tournament games, including Julie Clark, Angelee Hitchcock, Eileen Jones, Barb Wachowiak, Aubrey Clark, Corinne Paige and Sarah Pidgeon. 3.) The coaches also discussed potential expansion of the league tournament and would be in support of any increase in the size of the tournament field. It was noted that four teams tied for second place last fall, meaning one of the four teams did not qualify for the league tournament. The coaches felt the league has the depth to support additional teams. Action items: 1.) To revise the field hockey equipment guidelines to conform with NFHCA recommendation of providing 75 field hockey balls per team (150 total) for pregame warmups.
2. **Football:** Discussion items: 1.) The primary discussion item focused on non-league scheduling opportunities. With several regional conferences forming scheduling alliances, opportunities for non-league games will become more challenging. The Empire 8 has partnered with the Landmark Conference (new Division III football conference) on a two-year agreement for 2023 and 2024 in which each team will play two games against teams from the other conference. The scheduling alliances typically fill weeks 3 and 4 in the schedule, which may make it challenging for Liberty League teams to find regional opponents in those weeks. Several league teams have lost scheduled games against Empire 8 opponents due to the alliance. Pairing with another conference would be the best option, but adding an associate member, if feasible, would add an additional game for all teams. 2.) Assigner Bill

Schuster suggested adding an eighth official to Liberty League officiating crews, which the coaches supported. 3.) Regarding video exchange, the coaches agreed to notify the rest of the league if technical issues (camera failures, poor quality, poor angles) impacted any game video. Action item: 1.) To add an eighth official to Liberty League football officiating crews.

3. **Soccer:** Discussion items: 1.) With officiating assigner Kevin McGoff retiring, a group headed by Tony Perdue – a sub-assigner under McGoff – has been selected as the new assigner. Randy Lozier, part of the assigning group, will oversee the Liberty League. 2.) Bill Garno (RIT) has been selected to serve as the new NCAA Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) representative for the Liberty League. 3.) NCAA soccer rules changes, including the elimination of overtime during the regular season were discussed. A proposed change to the substitution rule in which there would be no re-entry in the second half – a proposal that most Liberty League coaches opposed – was tabled for further study. 4.) The coaches reaffirmed their opposition to the back-to-back league championship format and discussed potential alternatives, including Sunday-Wednesday-Saturday and Tuesday-Thursday-Sunday, prioritizing the rest period between the semifinals and the championship. Administrators raised concerns with potentially missing both Tuesday and Thursday in the same week as those days are often the same class days. 5.) The coaches committed to improving video quality for the upcoming season. Action item: 1.) If the league agreed to consider alternative championships formats to the Tuesday-Saturday-Sunday back-to-back format, the coaches strongly preferred a Sunday-Wednesday-Saturday format.
4. **Volleyball:** Discussion items: 1.) With the addition of William Smith in volleyball and the move to a six-team tournament, the coaches preferred a tournament format of Tuesday-Friday-Saturday as opposed to Wednesday-Saturday-Sunday. With the NCAA volleyball committee meeting on Sunday to select the tournament field, the coaches felt the league could be negatively impacted by playing the championship match on Sunday. Also, for teams advancing to the NCAA championship, a Sunday match could create a short turnaround for teams traveling for NCAA matches. 2.) The coaches discussed officiating and were generally satisfied with the job of assigner Mara Wager. The quality of line judges during some matches, particularly Fridays, has been a concern. The coaches were not supportive of having students from campuses serve as line judges, regardless of whether they had experience as men's volleyball athletes. 3.) With Johan Dulfer completing his service on the NCAA women's volleyball committee there will be an opening for a national committee member from the region. Action items: 1.) To adopt

a Liberty League volleyball tournament format of Tuesday-Friday-Saturday effective with the 2022 championship.

5. **Basketball:** Discussion items: 1.) The NCAA has changed the official championship ball from the Wilson Solution to the Wilson EVO NXT. The coaches proposed switching to the EVO. 2.) The video exchange policy was reviewed. The coaches proposed a revision to the policy where all home games in league play – both Friday and Saturday games – would be uploaded by midnight following the game. 3.) The league tournament format was discussed. The coaches had previously supported changing the tournament format from Tuesday-Saturday-Sunday to Tuesday-Friday-Sunday with the higher-seeded teams hosting in each round. With the administrators discussing potential changes to the league championship philosophy and structure, the coaches remain open to a Tuesday-Friday-Sunday format, which might provide a better student-athlete experience by allowing the championship game to be hosted on the campus of the higher-seeded team. 4.) The coaches discussed the current schedule and potential ways to reduce lengthy travel on some league weekends. Options considered included having men and women play at opposite sites; having men and women take separate buses; playing a two-division format; utilizing a 10-week travel-partner schedule; and potentially playing additional midweek games. While King will continue to explore options to present at the fall meeting, the administrators were less supportive of a divisional model or other models that could lead to increased costs. Action items: 1.) To change the official league ball from the Wilson Solution to the Wilson EVO NXT for the 2022-23 season. 2.) To specify that the home team in league play shall be responsible for uploading the game no later than midnight following the game.
6. **Swimming & Diving:** Discussion items: 1.) The possible use of relay jump pads in the league championship was discussed. Ithaca, the championship host, currently has the technology to utilize relay jump pads to determine if swimmers leave the blocks early during relays. Not all teams have the technology at their home pools to be able to practice with it. The coaches suggested that the technology could be utilized to confirm any disqualifications made by officials, but not used solely as a means of disqualification. If the official did not make a disqualification ruling, then the technology wouldn't be used, therefore, it could only serve to benefit competitors. 2.) Championship awards were discussed. Coaches currently vote on awards prior to the final relay of the championship. The awards currently serve as the end-of-season awards – Swimmer of the Year, Diver of the Year, Rookie of the Year. The coaches discussed having separate awards for athletes of the meet and then voting on the athletes of the year after the season (similar to track and field). The coaches agreed to revisit the topic in the fall. 3.) It was

suggested that teams could bring additional athletes to the championship beyond their 22 declared scoring athletes. These individuals would be exhibition swimmers only and would not score or swim in the finals. Some team budgets are established based on a roster of 22 competing athletes. Coaches also agreed to revisit this topic in the fall. Action item: 1.) To utilize relay jump pads at the Liberty League Championships to confirm officials' disqualifications on relay starts. The pads would only serve to confirm or negate officials' rulings and would not be utilized to disqualify teams unless ruled by the officials.

7. **Squash:** Discussion item: 1.) The focus of the coaches' discussion centered on growing the league and providing a better league/championship experience for squash student-athletes. As currently structured, the Liberty League men's and women's squash championships are two-day round-robin tournaments. Based on the history of the tournaments, few matches have been competitive due to the varying competitive levels of the teams. Growing the league to 7-8 teams through expansion and moving to a bracketed tournament format could offer a better championship experience for all competing teams. Since no current members have plans to add varsity squash, the only current means of membership growth is through the addition of associate members. The coaches have previously expressed support for Chatham University (m/w), Denison University (m/w), Fordham University (m) and Mount Holyoke College (w) as potential Liberty League squash members. All four institutions are varsity programs that are not currently affiliated with another conference. Denison has previously expressed interest in Liberty League squash membership. Haverford College is also not affiliated with a conference and had not previously been considered for membership. The league agreed in June 2021 to offer associate membership to Mount Holyoke, but the institution currently has an interim athletic director and wanted to leave the decision on squash conference affiliation to the new athletic director. The Liberty League is currently the smallest of the four college squash conferences. The Ivy League (7), NESCAC (11) and Mid-Atlantic Squash Conference (7) all have more teams than the Liberty League (5 men; 4 women). The coaches preferred to keep the championships as a combined event with the men and women competing on the same weekend at one site. They felt the combined event has been a positive experience for the student-athletes and has also provided cost savings to institutions with both men's and women's programs (one trip versus two). To play an eight-team bracketed championship with consolation matches – similar to the CSA championship format – the tournament would start Friday afternoon/evening and conclude Sunday morning/early afternoon. The current format starts Saturday morning, so teams have typically arrived Friday evening and have departed early Sunday afternoon. Action items: 1.) To extend an offer of Liberty League

squash associate membership to Chatham (M&W), Denison (M&W), Fordham (M), Haverford (M&W) and Mount Holyoke (W). 2.) To change the format of the Liberty League championship from a round-robin event to a bracketed tournament with consolation (play to place) matches (assumes the league can add members through expansion).

8. **Men's Lacrosse:** Discussion items: 1.) The coaches asked to revisit the decision to move the league tournament from six teams back to four. Although the league lost one team, the championship bracket was reduced by two teams. Given the strength of the league, with five teams being nationally ranked, the coaches felt that a six-team championship would allow for a full championship opportunity and enhance the likelihood of multiple teams advancing to the NCAA Championship. Increasing the field would allow for another quality win to improve a team's strength of schedule. Expansion would also enhance the student-athlete experience as the Liberty League is arguably one of the top lacrosse conferences in the country. 2.) The coaches requested a change to the all-league voting process to allow each institution the opportunity to nominate two defensive midfielders whereby two would be selected to the First and Second Teams respectively. The rationale for this request is that the game is played with two defensive midfield athletes per team. Action item: 1.) To specify in the All-Liberty League selection process that each institution may nominate two defensive midfield athletes to be considered for two spots on the First Team and two spots on the Second Team.
9. **Women's Lacrosse:** Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed concerns with the shortage of officials and the requests to reschedule games due to the limited number of officials. Coaches shared thoughts on ways to increase the officiating pool. Regarding officiating quality, it was suggested league explore the possibility of having the officials utilize headsets during games to improve communication. King offered to contact assigner Mara Wager to determine a cost for headsets. 2.) The coaches also expressed concerns with cancelling or forfeiting games and their impact on other teams. There were no specific recommendations offered, but the coaches noted that games should be rescheduled where possible to not disadvantage a team whose opponent cancelled the game. Action items: None.
10. **Cross Country / Track & Field:** Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed various aspects of the outdoor track and field championships. King suggested forming a subcommittee to review the league's cross country and track and field guidelines to more accurately reflect how the championships are conducted. Sam Albert suggested the league compile a technical manual to clearly define protocols that may not be included in the sport guidelines. Albert agreed to serve on the

subcommittee along with James McCowan and Billy Poole-Harris. 2.) Requiring indoor backup options at the outdoor championship for the vertical jumps (high jump and pole vault) was considered. Inclement weather may create unsafe conditions for the vertical jumps and if there is no backup then those athletes may not have the opportunity to compete. It was suggested that an institution could also secure an offsite venue for the indoor backup. Currently Vassar is the only institution in the outdoor track and field championship rotation that does not have indoor backup options. 2.) The coaches discussed a proposal to limit the number of entries per event to no more than eight per team. The consensus among the coaches was that if an athlete met the league's qualifying standard, then the athlete should be able to compete in the championship, regardless of the number of qualifiers per team. As an alternative, it was suggested that the league could review the policies for establishing sections. 3.) Regional qualifying meets were discussed. While there was some interest in establishing NCAA qualifying meets to reduce the number of 'last chance' meets, this is an NCAA championships issue that would likely require a significant increase in funding. Action items: 1.) To require institutions to provide indoor backup for the pole vault and high jump to host the Liberty League outdoor track and field championships.

11. **Men's Golf:** Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed course options for the Liberty League championship. While Turning Stone is an outstanding championship venue, it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure tee times early enough in the day where darkness will not be an issue. Unlike other league championships, golf utilizes public courses where the league tournament may not be the top priority. The coaches are going to explore other neutral-site options that may be more willing to accommodate the league championship. 2.) The coaches affirmed their desire to conduct a practice round prior to the championship. League guidelines currently do not permit a practice round to be conducted the week of the championship, although several teams have made separate trips to Turning Stone more than a week before the tournament to practice on the course. While teams have had an opportunity to play Turning Stone during the league's Fall Preview tournament, the course plays differently in the spring, so a practice round would improve the overall play and results of the tournament. Also, Turning Stone may not be able to accommodate the Fall Preview tournament in the future. 3.) To ensure that the top teams are able to complete their rounds, the coaches proposed that the top four teams would tee off first each day followed by the teams in the fifth through seventh positions. Initial pairings would be based off the latest Golfstat national rankings established prior to the spring championship. Action items: 1.) To approve that the pairings for Round 1 of the Spring Liberty

League Championship be based off the latest national Golfstat ranking prior to the Spring Championship.

- 12. Women's Golf:** Discussion items: 1.) The championship host rotation was discussed. Prior to the pandemic, the championship host was determined based on an alphabetical rotation of institutions. When the championship was moved to Turning Stone in 2021, the host rotation was interrupted. Even if the championship continues to be conducted at a neutral site venue, a designated host institution will need to coordinate the championship. It was agreed that the host rotation will continue with Wellesley. 2.) Future championship courses were considered. While Turning Stone is an excellent venue with quality championship courses, the consensus was that the Kaluhyat course may be too challenging for most golfers in the league. The coaches agreed to reach out to potential host courses that are centrally located to the membership. Potential options suggested include Edison Club, Ballston Spa and Schenectady Municipal in the Capital Region as well as courses in Cooperstown. 3.) The coaches expressed concerns about the ability of the league to maintain its NCAA bid as several teams have struggled with maintaining a roster of five golfers. Action items: While there are no current action items, the league is exploring options for a championship venue for spring 2023.
- 13. Rowing:** Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed the possibility of moving the Liberty League championship from a Friday afternoon (3 p.m.) start to Friday morning (8 a.m.) to take advantage of more favorable weather and wind conditions. A morning start also provides flexibility to adjust the schedule to a window when race conditions might be more favorable. A concern with shifting from afternoon to morning would be that some teams may not be able to travel to the championship the same day and would require hotel accommodations. 2.) To improve entry and seeding procedures, it was suggested that an entry deadline of at least one week prior to the championship is established. Once entries have been finalized, any races with seven boats can be moved to the end of the schedule to ensure that there are no boats in the warmup lane that would interfere with finals. If there are any races with three or fewer boats, those teams can be polled to determine if they wish to combine races (such as combining the 2V8+ and N8+ into one larger race). 3.) The coaches discussed Hobart rowing and its inclusion in the Liberty League championship. Hobart is a member of the Intercollegiate Rowing Association (IRA), competes in the IRA's open division and follows IRA rules, which differ in some aspects from NCAA Division III women's rowing rules, which most Liberty League men's programs follow. The question was whether all teams should be required to follow NCAA Division III women's rowing rules to compete in the league championship. Action items: 1.) To

conduct the Liberty League championship at 8 a.m. Friday morning annually to provide the best possible conditions for competing student-athletes. 2.) Two competing proposals were submitted by the coaches regarding the eligibility of a men's team to compete in the championship. The first proposal essentially requires teams to follow NCAA Division III women's rowing rules while also providing a postseason championship opportunity (i.e., IRA championship). The second proposal would permit men's rowing institutions to follow IRA rules. A motion would need to be put forward on one of the proposals.

14. **Softball:** Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed umpiring and assigning services. Although there were no glaring issues with assigner Kathie Graf this spring, the coaches would like to pursue an agreement with assigner Mike Aguglia (Central and Western New York Umpires). A past concern with Aguglia is his ability to provide umpires in the Albany area where he does not have a large pool of umpires. It was noted that Graf also did not have many umpires in the Capital District. 2.) The coaches requested a change in the tournament schedule on the first day, moving the start times back one hour, from 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 4 p.m. It should also be clarified in the guidelines that the home team chooses its uniforms. 3.) A suggestion was made to present a championship banner and a better trophy (instead of a plaque) to the championship team at the conclusion of the tournament. King will explore options for both. Action items: None. The committee is exploring options for a new assigner and will present to the administrators as an action item at the appropriate time.
15. **Baseball:** Discussion items: 1.) Feedback from the coaches on the league's two-division format utilized for the first time during the 2022 season was mixed. The divisional format served to identify the top four teams in each division and addressed previous concerns of an imbalanced schedule where teams didn't play all other teams. The league had two teams qualify for the NCAA tournament for the first time in more than a decade. While all teams had an opportunity to qualify for the crossover division series on the final weekend of divisional play, the crossover division series created an additional hurdle for the top teams in terms of qualifying for the NCAA tournament. The crossover games during the regular season served to fill bye weeks during divisional play, but the coaches felt they had little impact on the league standings other than serving as a tiebreaker for tournament seeding. It was suggested that the league explore other scheduling formats for 11-team conferences. Both the MAAC (Division I) and the MIAC (Division III) have 11-team baseball conferences. Those schedules will be reviewed for feasibility in the Liberty League and revisited in the fall. 2.) With the addition of Hobart to the league in 2023, the West division will have six teams. It was agreed that the top two teams that do not qualify for the

crossover division series, based on league winning percentage, would play a best-of-three season-ending series, regardless of division. 3.) Coaches discussed the 3-game series format. Under current league guidelines, if a 7-inning game goes extra innings, then the ensuing 9-inning game should default to seven innings. NCAA rules prohibit a 7-inning game from being played as a stand-alone game. The coaches proposed a series format of 9-9-9 while utilizing the 10-run rule. 4.) Infield/outfield was discussed. After the 2021 season, the coaches voted to eliminate I/O unless it was mutually agreed upon. Instead, it was suggested that I/O could be conducted if requested by the visiting team (to get acclimated to the field). 5.) The coaches proposed a set schedule of times for the league tournament, as follows: Thursday – 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.; Friday – 10 a.m., 1 p.m., 4 p.m.; Saturday – noon for the first game (second game, if necessary, 30 minutes after first game). Action items: 1.) To conduct Liberty League three-game sets with a 9-9-9 format while utilizing the 10-run rule in all league games. 2.) To specify that infield/outfield will be conducted if requested by the visiting team, rather than by mutual agreement. 3.) To revise the Liberty League tournament format as specified above.

16. Tennis: Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed the championship schedule and format. With four matches held on both Friday and Saturday, it is challenging to complete the entire schedule outdoors if matches run long. As a result, teams in the final match of the day have needed to complete matches indoors. If separate sites were utilized for the men's and women's championships, head coaches who coach both the men's and women's teams may be forced to choose which team to coach. Utilizing 12 courts simultaneously could be problematic if rain forces play indoors. The issue was tabled for further discussion, but the coaches agreed to move the Sunday championship matches to 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. in order to finish by the 6 p.m. NCAA deadline. 2.) Brian Bowman and Tim Riskie shared a scheduling proposal that they had developed. A number of dual-sport coaches have felt that the current scheduling method does not meet their unique challenges. Other coaches countered that the current method provides flexibility to schedule key regional matches needed for achieving regional and national rankings. A committee consisting of Bowman, Riskie, King and Tina McDermott agreed to work to identify key issues and develop possible models for consideration. 3.) Indoor backup facilities were discussed. Concerns were raised about Vassar's indoor surface, which had been previously addressed by the league. A proposal requiring mutual agreement among coaches to play on non-tennis specific surfaces was defeated. Action items: None.

17. Sports Medicine: Discussion items: The athletic trainers discussed weather-related decisions pertaining to contest safety. If athletic

trainers feel that student-athlete safety is at risk due to weather (rain, temperature, etc.), the group agreed that it should take an active role in working with game and contest officials in decisions regarding the halting of suspension of play. Michelle Walsh (liaison to athletic trainers) emphasized that the athletic trainers have had to shoulder a large burden during the pandemic regarding COVID testing and return-to-play plans and many individuals are fatigued and experiencing burn-out. Action items: None.

18. **Athletic Communications:** Discussion Items: Kevin Beattie provided an update from the athletic communications group, which held an information-sharing Zoom on May 19. Beattie offered to have another member serve as liaison to the group, but will continue in that capacity as needed. Action items: None.
19. **SAAC:** Discussion items: Megan Buchanan provided a recap of the Liberty League SAAC meeting, held Feb. 6 via Zoom. The group is planning to hold an in-person SAAC meeting this fall, which will be the first in-person meeting since Oct. 2019. Action items: None.
20. **Athletics Diversity & Inclusion:** Discussion items: Beth Tiffany shared that the Athletics Diversity & Inclusion Designees met several times during the past year. The primary purpose of the meetings has been information sharing. The group is planning to meet regularly in the future. Action items: None.
21. **Strength & Conditioning:** Discussion items. Chris Gray shared that the league's sports performance coaches began meeting for the first time this past year. The group is hoping to collaborate more with the athletic trainers as they see overlap in several areas. The sports performance group is hoping to see more regular attendance among individuals in the league. Action items: None.

VI. Review of Sport & Committee Reports

- A. **Non-Weather Related Cancellations:** The past two years with COVID have changed the league's approach to cancellations and rescheduling. The league utilized a number of different strategies, including forfeits and rescheduling of contests where feasible. Forfeits don't offer a great benefit to a team receiving a forfeit "win" as the win does not count toward the team's overall record or regional rankings. The consensus among administrators is that the policy of forfeiting contests that are unable to be rescheduled should continue to apply to any contests that are cancelled for reasons unrelated to weather. Decisions on cancelling and rescheduling of contests should be made by administrators and not by coaches. League play should take priority over non-league play in rescheduling decisions.

Motion: A motion (Miller, Beattie) to specify that if a contest cannot be rescheduled due to a non-weather-related cancellation, then it would be ruled a forfeit for the non-cancelling team. Decisions related to cancelling and rescheduling would be made by the respective administrators was APPROVED 11-0-0.

- B. Scheduling on Religious Holidays / Easter:** The league has not previously attempted to schedule contests around religious holidays such as Yom Kippur, Passover, and Easter. While institutions may have mutually agreed to move contests that have been scheduled during religious holidays, the league has not been involved with those decisions. The consensus is that the league should not attempt to schedule around religious holidays. Institutions respect decisions of individual participants to observe religious holidays and choose not to compete. Institutions may reschedule contests by mutual agreement, but the league will not be part of those decisions.
- C. Sunday Scheduling – Baseball /Softball:** Jackie Nicholson raised the issue of Sunday scheduling in the sports of baseball and softball. Scheduling contests on Sundays can burden support staff, many of whom are required to work seven days a week during the spring. Institutions with artificial turf fields are disproportionately impacted as contests frequently get moved to these facilities when grass fields are unplayable. Administrators discussed the option of playing Friday-Saturday and using Sunday as a buffer in the event of inclement weather. Further discussion is needed to determine the academic impact of playing on Fridays. The position of the baseball and softball coaches will be solicited, and the issue will be revisited at the league’s fall meeting.
- D. Contracts & Game Times:** Michelle Walsh sought feedback on contracts and game times. Administrators shared that they intend to continue utilizing game contracts. For league sports in which there are no specified game times – times established by mutual agreement of the competing teams – the times selected can impact travel budgets for visiting teams. Administrators should be involved in decisions to change game times.
- E. Football Non-League Scheduling Opportunities:** Athletic administrators from the six football-playing institutions – Hobart, Ithaca, RPI, Rochester, St. Lawrence, Union – met to discuss non-league scheduling opportunities. Recent conference scheduling alliances, including the Empire 8 alliance with the Landmark Conference, will reduce non-league scheduling opportunities, particularly in weeks three and four. Potential options to address non-league scheduling include a conference partnership/alliance and adding associate member(s). King will reach out to potential conferences and institutions to gauge interest.

Meeting adjourned for the evening at 5:32 p.m.

Thursday, June 2

Meeting reconvened at 8:22 a.m.

VIII. League Championship Philosophy / Structure (Continued)

The discussion on the league championship philosophy and structure resumed from the previous day. Budget challenges and potential cost increases are important factors to consider in potential increases to championship bracket sizes or changes to tournament structures. While the current championship bracket formula (round-robin sports with nine or more participating teams have a tournament bracket size of six teams while sports with eight or fewer teams have a bracket size of four teams) is consistent, it does not provide equitable access across all sports. Sports like tennis have a larger access ratio (67%) than sports like field hockey and men's lacrosse (50%). Having a similar access ratio, such as 60%, might result in an odd number of teams in certain sports (five in field hockey and men's lacrosse; seven in women's lacrosse), but it could also result in an advantage for top-seeded teams, which might avoid first-round games.

Motion: A motion (Bassett, Miller) to adopt a threshold of 60% of participating teams for all team sport championships with a Tuesday-Friday-Sunday format where feasible (sports of field hockey, soccer, basketball and lacrosse), effective with the 2022-23 academic year, was APPROVED 9-1-1.

IX. Vote on Sport Action Items

- A. CHAMPIONSHIP ACCESS: Motion** to establish a championship access ratio where a minimum 60% of teams participating in all round-robin sports will qualify for Liberty League postseason championships, effective with the 2022-2023 academic year while utilizing a Tuesday-Friday-Sunday format, where feasible (sports of field hockey, soccer, basketball and lacrosse). *PASSED 9-1-1.*
- B. CROSS COUNTRY / TRACK & FIELD: Motion** to require institutions to provide indoor backup for the pole vault and high jump to host the Liberty League outdoor track and field championships. *FAILED 3-5-3.*
- C. FIELD HOCKEY: Motion** to revise the equipment guidelines to conform with NFHCA recommendation of providing 75 field hockey balls per team (150 total) for pregame warmups. The current league policy requires 50 balls per team. *PASSED 8-0-3.*
- D. SOCCER: Motion** to adopt a revised tournament format should the league consider allowing alternative bracket formats for team championships. *[Vote not conducted – per motion on Championship Access above.]*

- E. **VOLLEYBALL: Motion** to adopt a Liberty League volleyball tournament format of Tuesday (first round), Friday (semifinals), Saturday (championship) effective with the 2022 championship. *PASSED 8-1-2.*
- F. **FOOTBALL: Motion** to add an eighth official to Liberty League football officiating crews. *FAILED 1-5-5.*
- G. **SQUASH: Motion** to extend an offer of Liberty League squash associate membership to Chatham (M&W), Denison (M&W), Fordham (M), Haverford (M&W) and Mount Holyoke (W) for championship purposes only (no round-robin competition). *PASSED 5-0-6.*

Motion to change the format of the Liberty League squash championship from a round-robin event to bracketed tournament with consolation (play-to-place) matches as per the attached schedule. [This assumes the league can add members through expansion.] *PASSED 5-0-6.*

- H. **SWIMMING & DIVING: Motion** to utilize relay jump pads at the Liberty League Championships to confirm officials' disqualifications on relay starts. The pads would only serve to confirm or negate officials' rulings and would not be utilized to disqualify teams unless ruled by the officials. *PASSED 10-0-1.*
- I. **BASKETBALL: Motion** to change the official Liberty League basketball from the Wilson Solution to the Wilson Evo NXT (official NCAA ball) for the 2022-23 season and utilize the ball in Liberty League tournament games. *PASSED 10-0-1.*

Motion to specify that the home team in league play shall be responsible for uploading the game no later than midnight following the game. *PASSED 9-1-1.*

- J. **ROWING: Motion** to conduct the Liberty League championship at 8 a.m. Friday morning annually to provide the best possible conditions for competing student-athletes. *PASSED 6-1-4.*

Motion to specify that in order to ~~be declared Liberty League champion~~ **compete at the Liberty League championship**, an institution's men's rowing team must adhere to all applicable NCAA Division III women's rowing policies and guidelines with the exception of a postseason opportunity equivalent to the NCAA Championship (i.e., participation in the IRA Championship event or a comparable event consistent with additional racing opportunities specific to Division III women's rowing). *PASSED 5-2-4.*

Motion to specify that the Liberty League, in full support of men's rowing and their member institutions, adopt the Intercollegiate Rowing Association's (IRA) policies and guidelines to help give structure and

guidance to our sport and league. *[No vote as previous proposal was moved and passed.]*

- K. **MEN'S GOLF: Motion** to approve that the pairings for Round 1 of the Spring Liberty League Championship be based off the latest national Golfstat ranking prior to the Spring Championship. *PASSED 6-0-5.*
- L. **MEN'S LACROSSE: Motion** to specify in the All-Liberty League selection process that each institution may nominate two defensive midfield athletes to be considered for two spots on the First Team and two spots on the Second Team. *PASSED 8-0-3.*
- M. **BASEBALL: Motion** to conduct Liberty League three-game sets with a 9-9-9 format while utilizing the 10-run rule on all league games. *FAILED 5-6-0.*

Motion to specify that infield/outfield will be conducted if requested by the visiting team, rather than by mutual agreement. *PASSED 11-0-0.*

X. Inflationary Concerns

- A. **Officiating – Mileage Stipends:** With the recent surge in gas prices, assigners are finding that officials are more reluctant to accept assignments where they need to travel significant distances. Assigners have asked conferences to consider travel stipends to offset rising fuel costs. IRS mileage fees are currently charged by officials in some sports (field hockey and volleyball) while other sports (baseball, lacrosse, soccer) have a travel stipend for officials that travel over a certain distance. The administrators are open to a one-year fuel surcharge that is tied to the price of fuel. King will discuss potential options with other regional conferences.
- B. **Volleyball Officiating Fee Proposal:** King reviewed a volleyball officiating fee proposal from assigner Mara Wager, which includes fees for the 2022, 2023 and 2024 seasons. The proposal calls for modest increases for the 2022 and 2023 seasons with flat fees for 2024.

Motion: A motion (Walsh, Lindholm) to accept the proposed volleyball officiating fee agreement for the three-year period of 2022 to 2024 was APPROVED 9-0-2.

- C. **Team Travel & Transportation:** Like game officials, institutional team travel budgets are also experiencing inflationary cost increases. Administrators discussed possible league-wide options to address increasing costs. Since game times can often dictate whether a team needs hotel accommodations, it was suggested that schools remain flexible on game times to reduce overnight trips where feasible.

XI. NCAA / Management Council Update

Michelle Walsh provided an overview of recent Division III Management Council discussions. Key updates included:

- A. NCAA Constitution Updates:** The new NCAA Constitution, approved by all three Divisions, goes into effect Aug. 1. The removal of the existing Division III overhead expenses allows the division to use an additional \$1.5 million for its annual operating budget. At the NCAA Convention, Division III adopted the Presidents Council resolution to move the existing division-specific provisions in the Constitution to the appropriate Division III bylaws, establish processes for implementing the new concepts in the Constitution and provide opportunities to address additional changes to the Division III bylaws as directed by the membership.
- B. Sexual Violence Attestation:** In April 2020, the NCAA Board of Governors expanded the Association-wide policy on campus sexual violence to include individual accountability measures. The expanded policy is effective with the 2022-23 attestation requirements. To fully serve the membership in fulfilling this annual policy requirement given the new Department of Education regulations, the Board directed the development of a membership task force to provide resources to assist members in developing implementation measures on campus. The Management Council requested further study of the campus-level legal implications, the penalty for non-compliance, and the administrative burden relating to the additional requirements, effective 2022-23. The Council directed staff to create the Management Council Campus Sexual Violence Policy Task Force to research these areas. The Council directed NCAA staff to distribute the NCAA sexual violence policy, including the timeline to comply with the new requirements.
- C. Gender Equity Review:** The Phase II report that reviewed all other championships was released to the BOG in the Fall and made available to the public and membership. The Division III Presidents Council will oversee a similar process as the Phase I report regarding its review and referral to key Division III committees for feedback and recommendations. To date, the gender equity review has led to three actions: 1.) Broadcasting of 2022 Division III women's basketball championship. 2.) Equity adjustments to some officiating fee structures - baseball, men's and women's lacrosse, and men's and women's volleyball. 3.) Increased communication between championship managers - especially in gender-like sports (e.g., basketball, lacrosse, volleyball, baseball and softball, etc. 4.) Increased travel party size for women's lacrosse.

XII. League Sportsmanship Initiatives

A committee consisting of King, Karen Hansen and Kaitlin Leach met April 20 to discuss challenges and offer recommendations/solutions to the issues of spectator and participant sportsmanship. It is important for the league to continue addressing sportsmanship issues when they arise. Institutions in the league often have different tolerances and thresholds regarding fan behavior and what is acceptable/unacceptable. Having buy-in from campus

groups, such as SAAC, can be important in establishing expectations for fan behavior. Institutions should focus on what they are able to control. Sportsmanship initiatives were discussed, including reinstating postgame handshakes (stopped due to the pandemic), utilizing Gameday the D3 Way resources, establishing team codes of conduct, and potentially establishing league sportsmanship awards.

XIII. Future Meeting Sites / Dates

Meeting dates for 2022-23 were reviewed.

- A. Fall Meeting:** Thursday, Sept. 22, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. (Zoom Meeting).
- B. Winter Meeting:** Friday, Jan. 13, 2023 at NCAA Convention (San Antonio). NCAA Convention dates: Jan. 11-14, 2023.
- C. Spring Meeting:** May 31-June 1, 2023, in-person meeting. Memorial Day – Monday, May 29, 2023. King will explore options (Turning Stone?) for a location in the western part of the membership.

XIV. Adjournment

The regular meeting adjourned and the athletic directors conducted an executive session to evaluate the performance of the Liberty League staff.

Meeting adjourned at 11:21 a.m.