



Regional Committee

Regional Conference 2016 Minutes

Regional Conference held on: **Sunday 18 September 2016** - 10:00 at the Matamata Bridge Club.

Present:

Rona Driscoll (Chairperson), Michael Neels, Anna Kalma & Jan Spaans (Secretary/Treasurer) of the Regional Committee.

Karen Martelletti – NZ Bridge Board

Alan Turner - NZ Bridge Board

13 of the 22 clubs were represented by:

Carol Crowfoot & Greg Davenport (Thames), Mark Thomson & Barry Jones (Hamilton), Bren Birss & Anne Clarke (Mount Maunganui), Stuart McKinlay (Taupo), Alan Dick (Rotorua), Jan Wills & Beth Vosper (Matamata), Malcolm Kirkby (Te Aroha), Gloria Hawthorne & Joss Davis (Te Puke), Clare Coles (Cambridge), Brian Gallaher (Waikato), Pat Ware (Tauranga), Eileen Barker (Putaruru), Linda Sloan & Nick Cantlon (Te Awamutu)

Apologies received: Ian Moore – WBRC, Vicki Jacobsen – Cambridge, Waihi Bridge Club, Whakatane Bridge Club, Morrinsville Bridge Club.

Welcome

Rona welcomed all to the meeting and acknowledged the presence of Alan Turner and Karen Martelletti of the NZ Bridge Board.

Presentations

Anna Kalma had been number crunching and compared our region to the wider NZ Bridge population. In summary:

- Our region has grown by 4% since 2013 and we are the second largest region by club member population.
- Solely based on home club members, 50% of our bridge members are located in 5 clubs, Tauranga, Hamilton, Mt Maunganui, Taupo and Cambridge.
- Clubs with a greater proportion of Junior players are growing, we have a 3% higher number of Junior members compared to the nationwide trend.

In the next part of the conference, club representatives of clubs which had grown, shared what they had done in the past year:

- **Stuart McKinlay** from Taupo pointed out that the last four years had been very successful at Taupo. He contributed this to the fact that they have a very passionate and knowledgeable bridge teacher in Rona. The way how the lessons were run and supervised bridge sessions lead to word of mouth advertising for the club and ultimately an increase in numbers at the club.
- **Whakatane** had a success story written by Richard Solomon on the NZ Bridge web site recently. Rona surmised that they had done a letterbox drop and that they had used the successful Morrinsville flyer from last year, to draw in the numbers to the lessons.
- **Mark Thomson** of Hamilton said they had created a nice colorful A5 size flyer and dropped this in about 800 letter boxes in targeted areas of Hamilton. They also invited a journalist of the Hamilton Press to a bridge session. An article was written about this in the weekly paper. They also went to factories, university, IRD and Fonterra morning teas / lunches to promote bridge. They also contacted the Chinese and Dutch community. The radio advertising the club did at the Coast and Newstalk ZB radio stations had created a lot of interest. They had done 100 advertisements at \$10 a pop at times when people drove to work or back home. The advertisement was lively and fresh and when played, struck a chord with all of us present too.
- **Alan Dick** from Rotorua said word of mouth and “scaring people into playing bridge” with humor had worked well for them.
- **Clare Coles** from Cambridge said that the cinema advertising was refused at the local cinema, but the numbers continue to rise at the club. This is contributed to the culture at the club. FUN is one of the key words, NOISE at bridge is okay as it is illustrative of a lively buzzing happening. The green pen for beginners during sessions was mentioned again, this is where more experienced players are only allowed to use basic bidding systems at the table, the improver lessons from NZ Bridge were very helpful. Plenty of social occasions and high lighting success stories / achievements of players also goes down well at the club. The Cambridge 6s is one of the outside of the box ideas that make the club such a success story. Clare also mentioned that you need an enthusiastic and encouraging Club Captain, also a playing committee which monitors which events work well at the club and organize special events, like having a curry dinner prior to the NZ Wide Pairs. The “host system”, where a member attends a session with the aim to partner up with anyone who needs a partner, is working very well too.
- **Bren Birss** of Mt Maunganui shared that they have a member who started bridge at the golf club with the aim to encourage the players there to join the bridge club. The Mt also holds a twin night, where the best dressed twins get a prize.
- **Greg Davenport** from Thames said that real estate agents could be good to help people find a bridge club and mentioned social media advertising pop ups could direct people to bridge clubs.
- **Brian Gallaher** of Waikato said they have a close to 100% retention rate of people attending lessons. He contributes this to very good partnership stewards and the use of “L-plates” with the basic system on it for players just coming out of the lessons.
- **Karen Martelletti** of Tauranga said that the shared lessons with the Mount was working very well for both clubs. Also adding a one session Novice Tournament to the Intermediate/Junior tournaments had worked well for them as it gave the Novices a good idea what tournaments look like. They issued a “Joker card” to each Novice, which they could use once per session to ask for help.

Fundraising

The region has been successful in getting grants to support the IP teams over the last few years. There are several organizations which clubs can approach for a grant. The WB is very grateful for the grants given by Pub Charity Ltd, but there are others, like the Lions Foundation. Anna said that Te Aroha had applied and was given assistance with the catering costs towards the Spa Town Teams. Alan Turner mentioned that Trust Power had been helping the Tauranga Club with electrical items when the club was renovating.

NZ Bridge Board presentation

Karen Martelletti used one of her renowned Power Point presentations to show which improvements had been made on the NZ Bridge web site. She also lifted a tip of the veil about the planned future, where clubs can change membership details directly to the NZ Bridge database, upload master points which are instantly available for all to see, give new members a NZ Bridge number, add tournaments and make links to tournament details and entry modules.

During lunch, minutes of the 14 July NZ Bridge Board meeting were displayed. This was to ensure all attendees were aware of the following:

That the board works towards a model which sees the board in a governance role rather than a management role, and as a consequence of this, the strategies of the board will be implemented by a person appointed by the board to lead this operational task pursuant to clause 14 of the Constitution.

CARRIED 65/2016

Alan Turner requested that his vote against resolution 65/2016 be recorded

Karen was advised prior to the meeting that the Waikato Bays Regional Committee would ask clarification about this during the regional conference. Specifically we were interested in why the Board wants to move from management to governance, what are the benefits of this move to the Joe Bloggs bridge players, what are the financial consequences for such a move and how does this increase “bums on seats”. We suspected that Alan Turner had voted against this move out of financial concern.

Karen explained that historically the NZCBA was a management committee, that when the NZCBA became NZ Bridge with an elected Board, the management style continued, but that a review would take place at some stage to look at becoming a governing committee. She mentioned too that the Board members were putting in enormous amounts of time and that this was not sustainable in the long term and that ultimately the Board members were all volunteers doing the work of people who would be paid for those jobs done.

Karen mentioned that more needs to be done in regards to marketing bridge and fundraising and that people with certain skills in those areas were not necessarily present in the current Board.

A move to governance could mean the appointment of a CEO or the role of the Secretary could be changed. Karen also said that it could mean a raise in affiliation fees or a small increase in master point fees but added that there was no business plan for this move yet.

It was mentioned from the group that NZ Bridge pushed last year for acknowledging volunteers and that ultimately the Board members were also volunteers, elected by the clubs because they have specific skills in their CV in order to keep the NZ Bridge train on the rails.

Other comments were from people with experience in the corporate world, who suggested that the Board looks at funding certain jobs rather than appointing people to become employees from NZ Bridge as that was seen as a risky move.

When asked, Alan Turner commented he was not against the governance model, but that the plan was financially not viable and that NZ Bridge would run at a loss within two years if it were to

go ahead.

As this topic is moved by the Christchurch Bridge Club to be discussed under General Business at the NZ Bridge AGM, it was stressed by Rona to the club representatives to make sure they reply to Alister as to who would represent their club at the AGM or make sure a proxy would be given to someone who would be at the meeting.

Mike Neels was given the following “job” prior to the meeting:

CAN YOU PLEASE PREPARE AND PRESENT SOMETHING ON REGIONAL ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT CLUB GROWTH, IE. WEBSITE, TRIALS, SPONSORSHIP, LEAGUES, ETC

Mike also did some number crunching and gave us his view that the Waikato Bays Committee did not do enough AT GRASS ROOTS LEVEL. He had worked out that 80% of the bridge players just want to play bridge once a week and are not interested in playing tournaments, yet most of the funding went to the 20% of players playing tournaments.

Mike showed with an anecdote what a bit of support to a new coming player can do. He proudly said that his greatest achievement in bridge was to take a player under his wing when this player was about to give up the game. This player was Jane Stearns.

Mike stressed that we need to focus on the lower echelon players as they are the backbone of bridge in New Zealand. They couldn't care less about tournaments as they are just in for the social aspect of the game.

His bottom line was: *So – if we want to increase club membership (from which future champions may arise – but most likely not) then we really need to shift our focus to what we can do to make bridge clubs more attractive to those who simply want a game of cards and a social focus. We need to put our thinking caps on and work out how to do THAT.*

The meeting then split into groups to discuss what could be done to assist the 80% group and retain people who come to lessons.

Some of the items mentioned by the groups were:

- International players should visit clubs and share their experiences, like the All Blacks do.
- Charge for lessons. It gives the impression that they are paying for something and are less likely to not show up anymore. Also include in their payment a club membership until the end of the year. This hopefully will keep them beyond the first year.
- Create a Fun Tool kit. This means think of social things to do with the members which makes them want to come to bridge more frequent.
- Create a Snippet Tool kit. This is a card with a bridge topic which could be explained prior to bridge starts.
- Find people in the right target groups, people who have time on their hands, like Probus, Lions, Golf Clubs.
- Mention achievements of players at all levels before the session.
- Find people to become great Partnership Stewards.
- Hi-Low bridge events, where Open and Intermediate players must play with a Junior.
- Cinema advertising should be driven nationally by NZ Bridge, ditto for radio advertising.
- Profile the game more, more active marketing.

Lastly, the Hastings Bridge Club letter to the AGM was mentioned, in which it is asked that the minutes of the NZ Bridge Board become more transparent and that reports get appended to the minutes.

Meeting closed at 14:40.

Jan Spaans
Waikato Bays Regional Secretary / Treasurer.

Minutes confirmed by

Name (*printed*): Rona Driscoll..... Role: Chair Person.....



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rona Driscoll', is written over a faint, light blue rectangular stamp. The stamp contains some illegible text, possibly a date or reference number.

30 October 2016