

Notes from the January 25-27 Boston Board of Governors Meeting

The January 25 meeting, 4-6:30 p.m. featured the approval of the Consent Calendar, containing the October 2007 BoG minutes, actions of the Executive Committee, and various Council and Committee Chairs. The meeting rapidly moved to the discussion by Dan Murphy and other By-Laws committee members of the process and proposals for updating the By-Laws to accommodate the new membership categories (Riding Centers members, active members over 21, Horsemasters Group members), clarifying executive positions and technical issues such as extending the effective date for corporate memberships. An unexpected benefit of the concern the proposed changes engendered in the membership was an unprecedented number of club officers were inspired to read the By-Laws. Discussions during the Annual Meeting DC and RS sessions had answered many of the concerns raised initially. Some minor wordsmithing is still underway, with the final product to be brought to the BoG at a later time for approval.

The Vice President for Activities, Anna Clader, reported that agreement is in place for Tetrathlon to offer, in Championships only, the two-ride feature, 550 possible points per ride, with a stadium-type round for both. Also, beginning in 2009, regions will no longer be able to send forward "reservations" for Championships, as these seldom have a relationship with later plans the regions make, and merely provide confusing paperwork.

Mike Amos, Vice President for Regional Administration, reported on new clubs and centers -- there are now 600 active clubs, 6 satellite clubs, 32 recognized Centers and 32 Horsemasters groups. At the 2007 year end, there were 11,543 members, with 381 of them being members through a Riding Center.

In committee reports, Richard Lamb will be rotating off the BoG this year but will remain active in many other areas of Pony Club, including as Chair of the Show Jumping Committee. The Policy Committee is exploring whether background checks of volunteers will provide advisable, feasible or necessary. That will be further addressed at the May meeting. Advisory Committee, tasked with choosing the Founders Award recipients, will be happy to be permitted to receive nominations by April 15th of each year so they can begin the process of choosing and contacting their nominees. They also have streamlined the USPC scholarship process. The Nominating Committee has a collection of strong candidates, from which three will be chosen for next year's openings.

The Communications Committee reported on the summer membership survey, and is working with the ad hoc Virtual Pony Club Committee on advancing the web page project. VPC was able to announce a path forward with a company that is also coordinating online entries with the new USPC database package, iMIS. Next will be the placement of a new front page, templates for each lead section page and training of volunteers and staff. Communications will also be addressing upcoming outreach efforts for Rolex and the World Equestrian Games.

Saturday's meeting of the Corporation had public comment supporting the Advanced Games competitors, as well as a plea for cross country to be counted as strongly in ratings as the dressage and stadium phases. Financially, the organization is strong, with total assets of \$5

million, and income from the new building's rental and investments. The operating budget for 2008 is \$2.8 million. Executive Director Peggy Entrekin reported that specialty ratings have resulted in 5 new Dressage Bs, 1 new Show Jumping C-3s, 15 traditional C-3s, and 169 new H-Bs. The C-3 passing rate is up 6 points to 73 percent passing, and H-Bs are succeeding at an 89 percent rate.

The 2007 Festival was the largest to date, and for coming years RSs can look forward to a streamlined online entry system with the establishment of the iMIS database system. By Sept. 2008 membership renewals should be accessible online, as we progress to a paper-reduction goal. There will be a \$5 dues increase for 2009, the first increase since 2005, and a new web look and feel should be appearing this summer. Areas of concern include the fact that our membership numbers are just holding level with the years since 2005, and that's including a healthy influx of members through Riding Centers.

USPC President Art Kramer stepped up to report that 2008 will be the year of no new programs, no reinventing the wheel, but "instead let's just grease the wheel." He also noted, that at the request of the Regional Supervisors, the national office will handle C-3/H-B tests for the regions, at least for the next two years. This met with approval of the BoG.

Furthering the financial discussion, annual fund donations are down from last year, a concern since \$138 of the money spent for each member does NOT come from that member's dues, but from these broader donations. A simple fundraising step each individual can take is to change their internet search engine to www.goodsearch.com, which when one signs on for the first time, asks which nonprofit should receive donations on a "per-click" basis. If 10,000 families click their daily searches through this product, Pony Club's bottom line improves. And through agreements with online retailers, purchases made through a GoodSearch connection will also provide a payment. The USPC Bank of America Credit Card is another source of painless funding for Pony Club; members are encouraged to consider that as an option in their personal finances.

Sunday's continuation of the BoG meeting featured the presentation by delegates of the National Youth Congress of the policy proposal the 43 regional representatives had developed over their 2 1/2 days of workshops. This year's group requested that the BoG allow the establishment of a National Youth Board, the logical extension of the youth boards many clubs and regions support. A similar board has been established by the USEF, one of whose members is also an NYC member. Meredith Baker, Jacob Kennedy, Jessica Barker, Katie Caouette and Giny Knox presented the proposal and fielded a host of questions from the very engaged BoG members. The team, advisors and staff will continue to work on details and present a formal business plan to the BoG May meeting.

The Development Committee discussed innovative methods of reaching potential donors, plus a new land conservation award to go to a club or individual for outstanding land conservation efforts. The Finance Committee reviewed the budget situation, potential rebalancing of the investment portfolio and capital and operating budgets.

The Course Walk

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And finally, under New Business, discussions focused on

- a potential new Junior Corporate Membership category with voting privileges,
- feedback to be gathered on a regional basis for how the age extension program is working.

The May BoG meeting, to be held May 16-18 at the USPC offices, will include a strategic planning retreat over the first days when committees usually meet, so all board committees are asked to hold their May meetings by conference call before the BoG session begins.