

United States Rowing Association Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2016 (9am eastern/6am pacific)

Attendees (all by phone)

BoD Members present: Erin O’Connell, Kris Thorsness, Gary Caldwell, Dan Herbert, Jim Dietz, Meghan O’Leary, Bill Donoho, Joe Manion, David Banks, Scott Gault, Jamie Redman, Sohier Hall

BoD Unexcused absent: Dan Newman

USR Staff: Glenn Merry (CEO)

Guests: NRF Co Chairs Marcia Hooper & Jamie Koven, NRF Executive Director Charlie Hamlin, Nick Peterson (ISC Chair)

Update on Referee Working Group Glenn Merry reported that the working group met. Staff tasks underway include new scheduling systems for regional and national regattas 2017. The working group is also looking at referee/volunteer conditions at regattas, LOC operations and USR staff processes, among other subjects. Ideas include a grading system for regattas, to allow refs and other stakeholders to see how the regatta was graded last year before they volunteer, as well as tying registered regatta status to a (to be revised) LOC manual compliance.

Glenn’s letter to the referee corps garnered a lot of constructive responses, and it is important that this group come up with substantive results for spring 2017. This process will challenge USR staff to address the issues and be accountable for implementation of new processes.

Nomination for SW Director Seat: Dan Herbert reported that the nominations committee interviewed three candidates, and recommends appointment of Sheila Parker Tolle, who has tremendous rowing and marketing experience.

Motion (Dan): nominate Sheila for board membership; Unanimous approval.

Highlights on Quarterly Management Report Glenn Merry reported on the new website launch, and membership/renewal rates. Renewals have exceeded annual budget -- 119% for basic memberships, on track to hit championship membership numbers (goal is to be up 17% from last year). The USR staff growth team is working on various issues, e.g., products and membership needs, committee structures, events, and increasing responsiveness. Expect outcomes first quarter 2017.

Glenn also reported that Sarasota hired a new CEO with a background in event/facility management, but no prior experience in rowing. For 2017 Worlds, they asked for help via Brett Johnson “on loan” – they will pay the bulk of his salary after December as he helps them with rowing operations, media, volunteers, fan engagement, etc. Staff structures will adjusted in-house in the fourth quarter, both to address Brett’s departure and post-Rio lessons learned. Also, Oklahoma City will host 1000m international Youth championship/festival in small boats for Central and South America – qualifier for Youth Olympics -- September 2017.

Revenues from NRF haven’t met the annual goal yet (\$290,000 of grant), and USR staff are still assessing revenues from late summer regattas. The hope is that 2017 Worlds and Boys in the Boat movie will generate additional interest/support for rowing. Charlie Hamlin noted that the NRF is confident that the remaining funding obligation will be met by the end of the year, or within \$150k.

Presentation and discussion re feedback out of Rio 2016 Glenn Merry discussed that the team fell short of medal goals in Rio. Context of performance over the last four years shows areas of underperformance and the need to evaluate how to move forward, primarily on the men's side. The Olympics provide the major visibility vehicle for our sport, and are very important. An evaluation by USR staff is set out in handouts circulated to the board: 38 of 52 athletes responded to written surveys, and staff interviewed 14 athletes, coaches reports and meetings, USOC staff, high performance clubs and High Performance Committee members, and several HP directors from other countries. The board discussed how to address this issue with the public, membership and donors, as well as how to leverage the women's 8+ and 1x success in fundraising efforts.

Glenn reported that he plans to form a task force to examine Rio performance and produce a comprehensive report with recommendations for the next quadrennial by December 2016 regarding coaching professionalism, experience and knowledge, as well as selection processes, HP Committee functions, HP Director's role, devising measurable performance standards for coaches and staff, and helping athletes making the step up from collegiate to international competition. The board discussed the appropriate make-up of this task force, and were invited to identify potential task for members in the following week. Timeline: identify task force members in the next two weeks; review process/identify questions October 1-31; study and report written November-December.

HPC Structure Tokyo 2020 Glenn Merry stated the HPC members need to have direct knowledge regarding elite level performance and with expertise in areas to contribute to the team and staff. He will follow task force recommendations regarding the make-up of the new HPC and will also survey other NGBs to see how they comprise their HP committees.

2017 World Championships Planning Glenn Merry reported that 2017 Worlds begin September 23, 2017 (lasting 8 days), and that regatta, USR and NRF staff are working on engagement strategies for public, national team alumni, and rowing communities. Staff are also working on sponsor involvement, and to include/leverage Rio sponsors. A higher than expected number of 2016 athletes plan to come back for 2017.

At 11:30, all non-board members left the meeting.

Report on Compensation Committee Meeting: Erin O'Connell reported that, per board discussions at the March 2016 meeting, a multi-year contract proposal for Glenn Merry is being formulated, including metrics in different areas of the organization with accountability measures. This group will reconvene in late October, to bring a proposed contract for Board discussion in December. Board members expressed desire that such topics as Board communication standards be included in any contract, and there was discussion about whether the HP Committee should remain under the CEO's purview.

Adjournment: 11:53 am