



## Referee Committee

Minutes of Meeting  
April 12, 2017  
Telephone Conference

### Attendance

#### Referee Committee:

Andrew Blackwood – Chair  
Ruth Macnamara – Vice Chair, Secretary  
John Musial – Regional Coordinator Representative to Committee;  
Youth National Championship Chief  
Jean Reilly – FISA  
Rachel Le Mieux – Trials Coordinator  
Terese Friel-Portell – Safety/Referee Utilization (joined call at 9:02PM)  
Gevvi Stone – Athlete Representative

#### USRowing Staff:

John Wik – Director of Referee Programs

#### Guests:

Sheila Tolle, Board of Directors  
Joe Manion, Board of Directors  
Mike Rosenbaum, SW Regional Coordinator  
Howard Meisner, NE Regional Coordinator  
Dee McComb, NW Regional Coordinator  
Dorothy Lazor, MA Referee, VASRA President  
Lloyd McDonald, MW Referee – Club National Championship Chief  
Jess McAlear, NE Referee – Regional Championship Chief  
Patty Hyatt, NW Referee

#### Absent:

Bob Appleyard – Referee College  
Marcus McElhenney – Athlete Representative

Andy called the meeting to order at 8:30PM EST.

John Wik stated that efforts have been underway to implement the Board's directives in regards to the \$85,000 increase in the Referee Program's budget for deliverables at USRowing's owned 2017 Regional and National Championships. However, current financial issues require USRowing to alter some of the Board approved referee compensation plans. Sheila will share how USRowing is working to overcome the budget shortfall; specifically, the impact on the Referees at USRowing's Owned 2017 National and Regional Championships. Please welcome Sheila Tolle, USRowing's Board of Directors, Treasurer.

## USRowing National & Regional Championships Referee Accommodations

Sheila shared that she is:

- A member of USRowing's Board;
- The Treasurer of the Board;
- and a member of the Referee community

Sheila stated that:

- Joe Manion, another Board member who is also a referee, is on the call.
- Kris Thorsness, yet another Board member who is also a referee, might be joining us tonight, depending on her work schedule.
- Marcia Hooper, the Board President, wanted to be on the call but is on a business trip in London, UK and it is after 1:30AM. Marcia understands and appreciates the importance of the referee corp.

Sheila had a couple of "asks":

- First, she is only going to discuss the referee topic. She is not in a position to speak about the CEO Search, the Men's National Team Head Coaching position, or the Nike sponsorship. If any of you have specific questions on these or any other topics that the Board is involved with, please email Sheila, Joe and/or Kris.
  - Second, please hold your questions until the end; many of them may be answered as details are shared.
- There are two key pieces of information:
    1. At the December 2016 Board Meeting, the Board discussed the "challenges facing referees at the Regional and National Championships" (length of workday, lack of breaks, amount of work, and out-of-pocket expenses). At that Meeting, the Board approved the following recommendations which were circulated to the entire Referee Corps on January 12<sup>th</sup> by the Director of Referee Programs:
      - a. Increase the size of the National Championship juries from 24 to 30.
      - b. Work with the Events Department to develop race schedules that would shorten the referee work day.
      - c. Provide referees full compensation for travel.
      - d. Provide referees with single room accommodations.
    2. In late-February, the Finance Committee reviewed the 2017 financials. It was clear that there was a significant budget deficit and immediate action was needed. After thorough review of the budget, it was necessary for expenses to be reduced.
      - *IMPORTANT to note: The Board looked at where reductions could be made without significant impact to athletes, athlete experience, and membership in general.*

The following changes have been **APPROVED** by the Board:

- a. Five open USRowing staff positions were put on hold. Exceptions are for the CEO position and the Men's National Team Head Coach. Those positions are in the process of being filled.
- b. Expense reductions are across ALL departments. They have been identified and enacted; specifically staff travel, discretionary spending,

consulting/contractors/professional services, etc. (for those familiar with corporate settings, you likely have some experience with this). All expenses left in the budgets had to be justified.

➤ *IMPORTANT: Every area/department has been impacted and the Board has made some very difficult decisions.*

• **WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE:**

- USRowing will keep the increased number of referees at the National Championships.
- USRowing will keep the modifications to shorten the race schedules.
- USRowing will honor the Full travel compensation.

*REPEAT: These three items are NOT changing from what was approved at the December 2016 Board Meeting*

- The **ONLY CHANGE** to what was approved at the December Board meeting is “to postpone providing referees with single room accommodations for 2017.”
  - **This change is only for the 2017**
  - For USRowing’s 2017 Regional and National Championships, referees hotel accommodations will be double occupancy. The result in savings is \$56,000.
    - A referee who wants a single room must pay the difference. The roommate assignment process will be managed by the Chief Referee in coordination with the Events staff.
- The three board members who are referees understand that this is a change. They recognize that some referees may feel that USRowing/the Board is not honoring the commitment they made at the December 2017 Meeting. But, given the severity of the budget situation, this change had to be made.
- **Positive action regarding referees:**
  - Having spoken with a number of referees, another area was identified as problematic for referees who had to fly to Regional and National Championships. The practice has been that the Referee booked their flights months in advance and carried the balance of that expense for USRowing. Reimbursement for that expense was not made until after the regatta. To address this hardship, referees will now have two options:
    1. Referees will be able to submit their reimbursement request, with all required receipts and paperwork, as soon as they book their tickets. If, for any reason, a referee is not able to attend the regatta they will have to return the funds.
    2. Referees may now use USRowing’s approved travel agency to book their flights. USRowing will be billed directly. This is the National Team’s Travel Agency which has been used by our National Team for the past 10 year. The caveat is that if the referee does not attend the regatta they will have to reimburse USRowing. Reservations and tickets will be in the Referee’s name, and therefore owned by the Referee and not USRowing.
- Referees continue to be a priority of the Board.

- Referees are a standing agenda item at the Board's quarterly meetings. At the March Board meeting a Task Force, led by Joe Manion and Kris Thorsness, was formed to continue the work of the former group (Glenn Merry, Gary Caldwell, Kris Thorsness and Joe Manion) and to continue to make progress on issues that impact the referees and ultimately the safety and fairness of all racing.
- Sheila has offered to help communicate these changes to our Regional and National Championship juries. She is also available to work with John Wik, the Referee Committee, the Regional Coordinators, and the Chiefs to assist with any/all communication efforts.
- Questions?

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Discussion

**John Musial** - In regards to communication, I would like to see this information be communicated, in its entirety and in the same fashion as it was announced in the January 12<sup>th</sup> email, to the entire Referee corps. I do not want it just communicated to the Championship juries. There needs to be an understanding of why these changes are being made and not hearsay. It needs to come from you, Sheila, as the representative of the Board.

**Sheila - ACTION** - John Wik please draft an announcement for Sheila's review, and then to be circulated to the Committee for comment before sending out to the entire corps.

**John Musial** - The National Championships entry fees were raised this year. Was this done with the intention of paying for the Board approved increase of Referee expenses? Was the increase driven by that and if so, with the current cuts made to the Referee expenses, where is that increase of funds going now?

**Sheila** - Yes, there was discussion of raising entry fees to cover additional referee costs. It was determined not to raise them as high as initially suggested. Therefore, there is not going to be a surplus of funds.

**John Musial** - From a Regional Coordinator's point of view, I believe this is going to be hard to sell these changes to the corps. I believe that the corps is not going to accept this message very well. I am concerned about the potential lack of interest of referees who will be willing to work the Regional and National Championships in 2018.

**Sheila** - I understand. Our goal was to make these changes so that they would have as minimal impact on the Referee's working experience as possible. Sheila, Joe and Kris are willing to discuss all of these changes with referees.

**John Musial** - Do I understand that there are now two ways to purchase airline tickets? And, if a Referee has already purchased their tickets, can they submit those expenses NOW for reimbursement.

**Sheila** – yes and yes. There is a risk in reimbursing the funds up front but the Board feels referees will honor their commitment and refund the monies if they are not able to attend the Championship.

**John Wik** – I will send out the travel notice and changes to everyone who is scheduled to work a National Championship.

**Rachel** – CPA hat is on – I always have questions about the numbers. You said by doubling up in rooms we are saving \$56,000, but over the past several years there is such an increase in airfare, I'm having difficulty reconciling how reimbursing travel at full expense is possible. We can talk off line if you want.

**Sheila** – feel free to work with John Wik and the Events team over the detailed numbers. I am working off the budget numbers presented. I did not dive into the heavy math. To get to the \$56,000, we asked the question, if we doubled up referees, how much would we save?

**Rachel** – I will ask for more information off line. I want to know more about the specific numbers.

**John Wik** – Rachel I am happy to talk to you off line about how AJ came up with numbers. AJ used the number of officials from last year and added 25% for the increase for this year and came up with a calculation by making the comparison between single and double occupancy.

**Rachel** – Board level question, dealing with budgets – was a mandate given across all departments to cut a certain percentage or were they asked to give up what they could?

**Sheila** – We asked each department to give us budgets with decreases in the amounts of 10%, 20%, 25% and 50%. No department was off limits. Everyone had to participate in this exercise. They were asked to give us specifics, line item by line item, and how these decreases would impact their department. Of Note: Certain activities are not going to be cut because they are funded by **GRANTS**. But, if the grant did not come through, the activity will not be funded.

**Rachel** – Non essential expense question ...

**Sheila** – let's take these questions off line.

**Rachel** – Trials specific question – Reimbursement for travel – do these changes pertain to trials jury members? Will they be able to use the Travel Agency to book their travel?

**Sheila** – I believe it does apply to trials.

**John Wik** – I believe it does too. It would be perfectly alright for the Trials Referees to submit their travel expenses ahead of time too. We will send the Trials juries the travel information too.

**ACTION:** John Wik will send a draft email to the Committee for review before it is sent to the National Championships and Trials juries.

**Joe Manion** – Caution on trial jury members – if there is a maximum travel amount per jury member and if they use the travel agent and it is above the maximum amount, they would be required to pay the difference back to USRowing.

**Rachel** – Trials juries as a whole have a maximum amount for travel expenses. There is a cap. Let's send a separate email to the Trials juries.

**John Wik** – I have spoken with the Travel Agency and have made arrangements so that it should be an easy process to use. They will have the list of referees for each of the Regional, National Championship and Trials juries. John Wik will work with Rachel to hammer out how to handle the Trials travel expenses.

**Mike Rosenbaum** – To encourage Referees to book their own travel, we should have a firm turnaround time for payment.

**John Wik** – if the expense forms come into Referee Programs with all the proper paperwork, they are coded and sent directly to accounting within 3 days of receipt. Accounting typically pays the bills weekly on Thursdays.

**Sheila** – I believe reimbursement should be made within 2 weeks but it might take up to 30 days.

**Jess**

- These budget constraints do trickle down to the Regional level.
- How soon will that communication be sent to the corps?
- I have already sent my Regional Championship Room List to the Hotel as single occupancy. I will need to send another communication to my jury inquiring about roommate preferences.
- What is the reimbursement amount / stipend amounts for the Regional Regattas?

**John Wik**

- The email notice will go out by the middle of next week. It will first be sent to Sheila and the Committee for review and comment.
- Regarding Regional Championships and reimbursements –there appears to be different reimbursement rates between the regions. I am researching and looking into this with AJ. Most Regional Championships have full travel reimbursement. Local referees may receive a stipend to cover their mileage. AJ and I will look into this and decide how to handle this issue going forward.

**Sheila** – It may be too late to standardized reimbursement rates for the 2017 Regionals Championships. It is important to address this issue before October 2017 for the 2018 budget.

**Lloyd** –

- I don't know where the single room suggestion came from so I don't think that asking people to double up is an issue. It is the fact that USRowing is changing what they said they were going to do for referees beginning in 2017.

- The second thing, like John Musial, I looked at the entry fees for 2016 and the ones for 2017. There is an increase of 21% for this year. The average for the last 4 years has been 13%. Just on that basis alone, USRowing is generating an additional \$14,500 in entry fees for Club Nationals. Compared to the last 5 years, 2017 is significantly higher than in years past.
- I guess USRowing doesn't have a cash flow issue if you are willing to advance the travel costs without the income of the entry fees.
- Of the \$56,000 in savings, how much of the short fall does that cover?

**Sheila** - The short fall is approximately \$1,000,000 and this is approximately 5%. USRowing's expenses almost always come in before the revenue does. We have some provisions to cover that. The cash flow could be better but we do have provisions.

**Dorothy** – What is the source or sources of the shortfall?

**Sheila** – I'm not comfortable discussing this. Until it is public knowledge through the Board of Directors, it is not appropriate for me to discuss. As a non-profit, USRowing has an audit every year. The audit was completed recently and it is 100% clean. There are no letters to management. It has been this way for 10 years. There is no malfeasance.

**Dee** – If using the travel agency, do they have guidelines for referees traveling coast to coast, ie. direct flights, number of stops, etc.

**Sheila**

- If using the travel agent, please be prudent; use your judgment. It is not necessary to take a Redeye. Just use your best judgment. If the system is abused, guidelines will be instituted.
- If you have other questions later, feel free to send them to me, John Wik, Joe Manion, or Kris Thorsness. If you send questions, we will reply to you with a copy to the Committee so the Committee can see the questions and answers. If the National Championship Chiefs need us to help with getting this information communicated to their juries, we are willing to help. Just let us know.
- Thank you for allowing me to take over your meeting and share what the Board is doing and the potential impacts.

**Andy** – Sheila thank you very much.

**John Wik** –

- Thank you Sheila and Joe for joining us.
- No other items on the agenda.

**Rachel** – The first trails event is next week.

Rachel makes a motion to adjourn the meeting.

John Musial seconds. No objections.

Meeting adjourned at 9:21PM EDT.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Macnamara  
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