

Committee Name:	Board of Directors	Session #:	1
Committee Chair:	Ed Coates		
Minutes recorded by:	Carrie Stolar	Date/time of meeting:	3/02/2024 8:30 AM Central

Actions Taken:

1. Approved: The amended Feb 19, 2024 BOD meeting minutes.

Number of committee members present: 18	Absent: 0	Guests: 1
Committee members present/virtual (list all, including chair and vice chair): Ed Coates - President; Kenny Brisbin - VP of Community Services; Crystie McGrail - VP of Local Operations; Julie Dusliere - VP of Administration; Robin Smith - VP of Programs; Carrie Stolar - Secretary; Jill Gellatly – Treasurer; Peter Guadagni (Immediate Past President); Katie Kenyon (Legal Counsel); Dawson Hughes – CEO; At-Large Directors: Sue Nutty (Breadbasket); Charles Cockrell (Colonies); Susan Ehringer (Great Lakes); Paige Buehler (Northwest); John King (Oceana); Kris Wingenroth (South Central); Britta O’Leary (Southeast); Jeff Commings (Southwest).		
Not present: none		
Guests: Kyle Deery.		

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 AM Central Time.

1. Ed welcomed the BOD members and thanked them for their time this weekend and outlined the meeting ahead.
2. Agenda review and declarations of conflict of interest (Ed): There were no changes to the agenda or conflicts of interest.
3. Approval of Feb 19, BOD meeting minutes (Carrie): **MSA for approval of the amended Feb 19, 2024 BOD meeting minutes.** Discussion: none. **The motion passed unanimously.**
4. Ice Breaker (Susan): The BOD participated in team building exercises. The first exercise involved finding matching pairs. The second exercise generated a discussion about the BOD’s hopes, expectations, and concerns for the Winter BOD meeting.
5. Approach to Board Service (Paige, Julie) – Harris County/Houston Sports Authority Chairman, Kenny Friedman: Kenny, a lawyer by trade, has been Chairman of the Board of the Harris Co/Houston Sports Authority for the past 15 years and has served on many boards, both public and non-profit, of all sizes (7 to 70 members). Kenny gave an overview of the boards that he has been a member of, but focused on the Sports Authority, which is a governmental entity created by the legislature to build and finance professional sports stadiums in Houston. They build the stadiums with bonds and pay them off with hotel and car rental tax receipts, not public money. Fifteen years ago, the organization morphed to a sports marketing organization. The Super Bowl, Final Four, College Football Championships and smaller events (world table tennis championships) helped draw visitors to Houston and ultimately helped pay off the stadium bonds and helped the city become an international sports city.
 - a. Kenny shared what he has learned from his board experience over the years.
 - i. Be committed to the cause.
 - ii. Speak up. Don’t be intimidated. Ask questions.
 - iii. You are on the board for a reason. What is that (fundraising, etc.)?
 - iv. Be prepared. Read. Do your prework. Keeps the momentum going.
 - v. Understand the role that boards serve: Select/evaluate the CEO. Oversee the CEO. Boards aren’t involved in the day-to-day operations of the organization. “Stay in your lane!” Be supportive of CEO and chair.
 - b. When do boards struggle?
 - i. When the chair dominates the board. Don’t be a rubber stamp.
 - ii. When the chair doesn’t provide strong leadership or direction and the board is aimless.

- iii When the board has personality issues or a clash of egos. Be able to work cooperatively with fellow BOD members. Be persuasive and get your ideas listened to. Don't be aggressive.
- iv When factions evolve as it makes every issue a win or lose situation. Be an individual.
- v When the BOD loves the cause but doesn't provide the leadership for the organization.

BOD service should be fun, rewarding, interesting, and challenging. What do you want to get out of being on a BOD? Networking, moving an organization forward? Identify that and work towards it.

Kenny feels that this organization (USMS) provides a great service to people. Embrace the board with an open mind, enthusiasm, and respect for your fellow BOD members.

Questions:

1. How do your boards meet (Zoom/in-person)? During covid meetings were on Zoom. Now they are back to face to face. Zoom isn't nearly as effective for board meetings. He feels that there is better interaction when board meetings are in person.
 2. Every board has similar challenges: keep egos in check and keep the BOD moving down the same path. Be constructive. Board members genuinely care and usually have a long background with the organization.
 3. What if the board has fundamental disagreements about priorities or different agendas? Forge a consensus.
 4. What is the role of a board on strategic plans? It is a BOD function. The CEO plays a major role in framing the strategic plan. Hopefully the board and CEO are on same page. Look towards goal of where to be in 5 years.
 5. What is an effective way to onboard and educate new board members? Sit down with the new members. Give a binder with articles, overview, bylaws, FAQ. Have interactive dialog.
 6. How often do you talk to the CEO? Daily. His role is to be supportive of the CEO.
 7. Kenny was asked about open board meetings vs closed. He said that it is hard to have difficult conversations in open board meetings. Because his board is a governmental entity, they can only go into executive session for limited things (HR, litigation). He regularly calls board members to provide background information.
6. Governance: Board Source and Board Self Evaluation (Paige): Session moved to Sunday morning.
 7. National Meetings: Relay/National Coaches Clinic, Annual Meeting (Dawson, Crystie, Kenny, Ed):
 - a Relay: Dawson shared the proposed schedule for Relay 2024. The messaging for Relay will begin in the next few weeks and will include who to send from each LMSC. Britta asked for a one pager for Relay, including who to send, why, and what will they learn. Peter asked if at Relay there will be an opportunity for idea sharing? Dawson answered that there will be a best practices session.
 - b National Coaches Clinic: Bill is working on the National Coaches Clinic (NCC) registration. Relay and the NCC will bring our coaches together with our volunteers that manage our structures locally. We will promote interaction between the two groups. One thing to keep in mind is that coaches' registration fee is paid by the coaches directly, but many LMSCs subsidize them. Coaches will have access to all sessions, including those of Relay, however, volunteers from Relay can't attend the coaches' sessions. The LMSC Development Committee session on Saturday morning will be done early so coaches that can attend. Kenny Brisbin said that the Coaches Committee will contact LMSCs directly and share the importance of sending coaches/supporting them. Bill is working on locking in the speakers for the NCC. The early registration fee for the NCC will be \$300/\$325 which includes hospitality. Friday night will have an optional fee for food (add on) for coaches. Kris asked how many coaches we are expecting to attend. Looking at past NCCs, in Pacific there were 125. In Maryland there were 100. In Vegas there were challenges and there were 62 attendees. The goal is 100 attendees. Peter asked how we get the important local coaches to attend rather than the same ones each year? Dawson said that we need to do some asks. Kris asked about ASCA and Masters. Most of the coaches near her are USA-S coaches. Dawson said that ASCA has had some Masters tracks, and we will have some Masters content at ASCA in Orlando. USA-S has a workshop weekend in Denver in October. We may have Masters content there, including club development. The biggest hurdle is Safe Sport and Masters.
 - c Annual Meeting: Ed said that work will begin to start filling in the schedule for committee meetings so that it can be shared. In 2025 the annual meeting will be hybrid. Dawson and the staff are looking at the central part of the country for a location. After this year, will work on a plan for 2026 and beyond. Charles said that we should talk about intent and look at feedback as we go into planning.
 8. Marketing Calendar Overview (Dawson and Kyle): There are four tiers of communication: National, LMSCs, clubs, and committees/individuals. The communication calendar is planned 6 months in advance. The goal of the calendar is to make sure that members aren't overloaded with communications. The staff meets weekly to understand the schedule for the week

and its impact. Kyle shared the social media calendar which is also reviewed on Monday mornings. “Home page Heroes” (sliding photo story links) are also reviewed each week as well as priorities for the organization that we want members/potential members to see. Robin asked if they look at engagement/open rates? Kyle said that they look at click rates as open rates no longer mean anything (Apple no longer tracks open rates.) Crystie asked if there is a documented process for committees to send communications. Kyle said that [it is in policies](#) on the website. The board discussed the name “Streamlines.” It is not clear when it hits your email inbox as to which edition of streamlines it is. Kyle will rework the wording so “volunteer” appears first in the subject.

9. Membership Survey (Kyle): In December, the membership survey results were distributed to the BOD. For the purposes of the survey, non-members are former members. Kyle said that the first survey was completed in 2011, and a new member survey happens each year. The plan was to do an in-depth survey like this every 10 years, then covid delayed it to 2023. We are planning to do another in-depth one in 2031. Metropolitan State in Denver completed the survey, and their focus was on partnerships and sponsorships, so we got the work done for free. We can utilize the survey results and filter them to a local level. Now that we have the results, the next step is to lay the strategic plan on top of the results. One popular idea among members in the survey is holding stroke clinics.
10. Break at 12:11 PM for lunch. Meeting resumed at 1:02 PM.
11. National Office Strategy (Dawson):
 - a 2023 Preliminary Financials, Cash Flow, Metric Dashboard: The Finance Committee is close to final numbers for 2023. A loss of \$290K is budgeted, but we will end up with a loss of \$60K without depreciation. Income from investments is strong at \$332K. Last summer we used a \$250K line of credit at a cost of \$600 to cover cash flow needs until November when our inflow of cash from registration began. We will use the line of credit again this year or make a transfer from investment reserves this year. It is projected this inflow of cash will be needed in May.
 - i USMS Performance Dashboard: Executive Overview: This dashboard will be sent in advance of BOD meetings, and it includes the big picture of all programs (CCS, GUS, USMS).
 - 1 The number of individuals in the database is 151K. Total mission participants are 89K, which includes those participating in Masters’ activities (CCS and USMS will include GUS).
 - 2 Net operating income (includes our capital expense) is a loss of \$327K (which is our budget), Net income including investments of \$302K. Net income plus GUS is the budget. This dashboard, which is 8 – 10 big picture numbers, will be shared with the BOD monthly.
 - a Discussion/Questions. We are trying to meet our mission in new and unique ways. We are a nonprofit and we have a mission, and our goal is getting adults to swim. To do this we have to have a viable business. Many want to swim in less traditional ways. Jill and Dawson will work on tweaking the dashboard, creating a standardized format for looking at high level metrics.
 - b GUS update: The revenue from GUS is received from May-July, so it complements the USMS revenue stream. Fourteen league directors have signed on, up from 7 last year. San Francisco is a likely addition. Orange County and Austin should also be new for 2024. The goal is 18 markets. GUS has enough cash to get through the first quarter, then the registration cash flows in. We are also working on an insurance quote. Britta asked about the swimmer registration fee structure. Brian has pricing set at \$75 for all but Atlanta, and there will be an early registration discount. USMS members will also have a \$5 discount, and we will see who is swimming in both USMS and GUS.
 - c Independent Swimmer strategy: Continue to provide services to support swimmers and small groups that may not have access to a USMS club, coach or events.
 - i Consider future development of services specifically for the independent swimmer.
 - ii Leverage and package existing USMS capabilities and resources.
 - iii Encourage and facilitate participation in USMS programs and events where possible.

LaneMate (program name for the independent swimmer product):
What is it: A package of existing USMS capabilities and resources.

- Swimmer and online content
- Workout library
- Fitness logs/swim.com
- USMS community
- Unique streamlines newsletter

No access to sanctioned events, USMS membership or USMS club affiliation.

Target: lap swimmers, triathletes, those that don't have convenient access to USMS clubs or events, those intimidated by "Masters," those not interested in swimming with a group.

Other **potential** products:

- Online stroke analysis: what is it: Technique advice from a Masters coach via video submission (2 rounds of video/feedback)
 - Add-on product for LaneMate and also for USMS members
 - Separate sessions for each stroke and starts/turns.
 - Target consumer: lap swimmers, triathletes, those with no convenient access to a coach, those intimidated by "Masters," not interested in swimming with a group, members that aren't getting stroke feedback.
 - Dawson outlined potential price points for members/non-members, monthly and annual subscriptions.
 - Kyle is creating a best practices document on taking swimming videos.
 - Charles asked how people will be made aware of the program: Through social media, connecting with former members, etc.
- d Dawson walked the BOD through the USMS Brand/product evolution (strategic vision)
 - i Big picture vision: The USMS Family of brands: A broader appeal to the adult swimming community
 - 1 Youth swimming feeds into CCS, GUS, LaneMate, Masters swimming.
 - 2 ALTS feeds into GUS, LaneMate, Masters Swimming (not a growth driver of membership)
 - 3 People who didn't swim as kids are not reflected in chart below.
 - 4 Swimmers are the lowest hanging fruit (4 million lap swimmers).

USMS					
CCS	GUS	LaneMate	Masters Swimming	USA-s Foundation	ALTS

- e Swimmer Magazine: digital: In 2017 35% of members opted out of receiving a hard copy. Currently 55% of members opt out of receiving a mailed hard copy. The Finance Committee recommends a multi-year plan to discontinue the hard-copy version due to the \$150K annual expense to print and mail it. One suggestion is to charge a \$5 surcharge to those who want to continue to request to receive a hard copy and increase the surcharge \$5 per year for a total of 3 years.
- f Membership fee discussion: Discussion about a fee increase, its timing and the LMSC/National split highlighted the need for a plan and overall philosophy on fees.

12. Breakout Sessions to Provide Feedback to the National Office:

- ✓ Digital-only Swimmer Magazine Group: Susan, Paige, Ed, Robin
 - Initial reaction: The ramp is too long to go fully digital, especially since the Finance Committee is recommending the move.
 - What objections need to be addressed: Consider the idea of buffet or cafeteria style fees, basically add-ons to the base membership, however this can feel very nickel and dime-like. Is there an advertising impact? It is a non-issue. Sponsors already know.
 - Recommendation from group: In 2025, charge a fee of \$10 to receive a hard copy of the magazine to cover the cost to print and mail it, and increase the price to \$15 in 2026.
 - Thoughts from others: Raise the price for the opt-in to disincentivize. Start at \$15. Then \$25 the next year.
- ✓ Membership Fee Group: Carrie, Kenny, Kris, Peter

- Hold the LMSC fee at \$14.
 - The group was split on the timing of a membership fee increase between Nov 1 and Jan 1, focusing on goodwill vs budget impact.
 - Eliminate sanction fees. This should encourage holding events and has a relatively small budget impact of \$35k per year.
 - The group was split on the format of the annual meeting beyond 2025.
 - The group recommended a flat fee for attendees to cover Relay hospitality.
 - Discussion: If an event manager doesn't follow the rules, don't sanction the event.
- ✓ Independent Swimmer Initiative: John, Charles, Crystie, Sue, Katie
- LaneMate and stroke analysis
 - LaneMate: Is there enough there to appeal to what's needed? No goals or guided experience and how is this managed for customer service/getting questions answered?
 - Online stroke analysis: This could be a technology issue: how is the platform? Will 2 sessions be enough? We will need to have a disclaimer (it isn't going to fix everything). The price is good. The group would like to see it in action. It could be a benefit to clubs/coaches as it adds people to pipeline. However, is this pulling people from current USMS resources?
 - Response from Dawson and Kyle:
 - We have staff with bandwidth.
 - We have an unfilled staff position - waiting for the best place to deploy the position (here or GUS or ?)
 - We could have a GUS staff person next year.
 - Technology: The platform that already exists. They will do some testing.
 - Marketing plan is TBD. It was suggested that it will need influencers/cohort etc.
 - It will build the pipeline. Participants will get a feel of being a Masters swimmer without the full commitment.
- ✓ Changes to College Club Swimming (CCS) "benefits": Jill, Jeff, Britta, Julie
- Bridge members should be incorporated so that they are USMS members.
 - Should go this go to the HOD? It doesn't have to but for transparency it should be well communicated to stakeholders.
 - We need to improve the education of what CCS is to those involved in CCS. Many don't know that they are a part of USMS.

Next steps: Dawson will begin updating the 3-year plan.

13. Transgender Process, Procedure, and Policy (Kyle, Dawson):

- Task force: Jeff, Peter, Claire Letendre, Susan, Crystie and Kenny, Kyle and Dawson
 - Phase 1 and 2: discussion of our policy and the structure around it
 - Phase 3: options
 - Honor system
 - Eligible for USMS recognition programs
 - Not eligible for AQUA recognition programs
 - Current policy with clear process and procedure
 - Eligible for USMS recognition programs
 - Not eligible for AQUA recognition programs
 - Current policy for participation only
 - Not eligible USMS recognition programs
 - Not eligible for AQUA recognition programs
 - Adopt AQUA policy: Prioritize fairness over inclusivity.

a Lively Breakout discussion:

- i Balance between inclusivity and fairness: How to be inclusive but fair to female athletes competing.
- ii Want results for transgender athletes as we are an inclusive organization.
- iii We need to have a process.
- iv We value the member experience.
- v PR: we need a clear message, and it will continue to evolve. We need a position statement.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:11 PM Central.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carrie Stolar, Secretary