

Committee Name: Diversity and Inclusion Committee Chair: Jeff Commings

Minutes recorded by: Ally Sega

Session #6

Date of meeting: 6/7/2023

Time of meeting: 8 pm EDT

Actions Taken:

1. May minutes approved.

Number of committee members present: 8 Absent: 5

Committee members present (list all, including chair and vice chair): Jeff Commings, Ally Sega, Sarah Welch, Rook Campbell, Vicki Shu, Laura Dennison, Virgil Chancy, Chris Campbell: Liaison to the National Board, Wilson Josephson: Coaches Committee Liaison,

Others present:

Not present: Leann Rossi, Leo Letendre, Katherine Weathers, Daniel Paulling: Liaison to the National Office

Minutes

1. Welcome and Announcements. Jeff welcomed people to the call.
2. Virgil motioned to approve the April minutes and Sarah seconded the motion. All approved the minutes. All approved, none opposed, no discussion.
3. Jeff informed everyone that there were no nominations for the D&I award yet. He asked everyone to remind everyone that the deadline is coming up and he is hoping to have all the nominations by June 30. Jeff will decide if a sub committee is needed based on the number of nominations.
4. Code of Conduct Webinar: Vicki said that Phyllis Quinn will be a speaker for the webinar as the Chair of the Pacific LMSC, having created a Code of Conduct for the

Pacific Masters. Jeff said that he will also speak having created a Code of Conduct for his club. Tom Moore has agreed to help create a powerpoint for the webinar.

5. Holiday Calendar and Best Practices: Sarah said that she had talked to Rook and they discussed that there may not be a best practice yet, but that maybe leading a workshop/discussion regarding holidays and memorials might be a good way to find some positive ideas that could be brought back to D&I. Rook suggested that Zoom would be a better format than a webinar in that it would be a discussion where everyone could get ideas from others instead of D&I giving information out.

6. Emails regarding Nationals: Jeff gave some background that the Championship Committee would be sharing the responsibility of picking host cities with the National Office. The National Office had picked the site in Sarasota and had done so in 2020 or so. Jeff said that there is talk in other spaces about people personally not going to Nationals based on the location, but that he has not heard any requests to change the location or for large boycotts of USMS. Virgil said that he has heard that many people are suggesting that it will be a smaller nationals due to people going to Worlds in Japan instead. He said that people in his area are not considering the safety of the area in deciding to go or not. Vicki has a coach in her area that is not recommending that people go as she typically would due to the area, although she isn't specifically telling people not to either. This coach is also uncomfortable going to Texas for the annual meeting also. Rook sent some information from groups that are telling members of certain groups to not go to Florida. Jeff brought up the issue with the "Bathroom Bill" legislation in North Carolina as Nationals were in Greensboro. Rook found the reply email from Peter offensive as he didn't address anything that USMS could or would be doing based on the current risks to some, noting that there were no requests to move championships, but only to address the issue. Jeff asked the committee to come up with suggestions as to what we as a committee could do to make this situation better. Laura suggested that we request that Peter, or the National Office could make a statement. Laura questioned what safety measures could be put in place. Ally also referenced back to Nationals in Greensboro, and made the comparison that there was a bill in legislation versus now in Florida, much of this has been passed. While there was a vocal minority of anti LGBTQ+ people then, while now there is a larger group that is louder and more aggressive in Florida. She found that Peter's email lacked empathy and understanding of how people could feel going to Florida. She expressed concern that the venue of the meet was not her concerns regarding safety, but the areas around the pool, including the airport, hotels, restaurants, etc. Rook noted that Peter said that he hopes everyone has a safe and enjoyable nationals and Rook would like to see specifics of what Peter and USMS is doing to ensure that members are safe. He added that there is a law in that area of the country that using a bathroom could be considered a sex crime. Ally asked which members were going to Nationals, and does safety play

a role in the trip, and if people weren't going, was it due to safety or other reasons. Also, questioned if there would be members that would feel comfortable being an out ally in that area. Laura said that she wasn't sure that she felt comfortable going due to having rainbow spokes on her chair. Virgil suggested that not going could be considered a win for that anti LGBTQ+. Rook suggested that while he often advocates, despite the risks, that the consequences in this case may be too great for some people, up to and including death. He also suggested that USMS needs to do something as an organization and not just expect individuals to have to defend themselves. Virgil suggested that Peter be given a chance to explain his response. Vicki suggested that we were giving our reaction and suggestions to Peter and that the point wasn't to bash him. She also suggested that as the Diversity and Inclusion Committee it would be appropriate to call on our group for guidance in these circumstances. Chris tasked the committee with giving Chris and Jeff specifics to take to the Board and Peter. Sarah questioned if there was a lack of people in leadership currently that could see things from a diversity lens. Sarah suggested that there have been other issues in the last few years where USMS has been slow to respond to diversity issues. Jeff suggested that a statement addressing some of the laws and challenges for those traveling could be helpful. Rook would like USMS to show how they are planning to make Nationals safe and enjoyable instead of just saying that they will. Laura questioned if USMS had plans to hire security. Ally suggested that the situation regarding safety in Florida is bigger than Peter or USMS, and that USMS acknowledging that there are legitimate concerns for some people and showing empathy towards that would be appreciated. Rook would like to see USMS try to be more proactive in making safe spaces for people, instead of reacting to situations. Rook would also like to see how our committee is truly impacting the organization as a whole. Jeff will write up a list of ideas and send it to the members, those on the meeting and not on the meeting.

7. Coaches Committee update: Wilson said that he had nothing to report but thanked the group for the discussion.

8. Chris's National Board Report: Chris said that he had not seen the email prior to Peter's response and that he was brought into the conversation after. He is hoping that the committee can create suggestions that can be brought to the board. He reminded people that the Board of Directors sets the policy and the National Office implements them. Any concerns about policy should be brought to Jeff and Chris so that it can be brought to the board.

9. Wrap Up: Jeff agreed with Chris's comments. He also said that he thought that this would make the organization stronger in the end. Vicki thought that her contact would find it helpful to know that they weren't alone in her concerns regarding Nationals.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm EDT. Next meeting is July 5, 2023.