

Committee Name: Diversity and Inclusion Committee Chair: Jeff Commings

Minutes recorded by: Jeff Commings

Session #8

Date of meeting: 8/2/2023

Time of meeting: 8:30 pm EDT

Actions Taken:

1. July minutes approved.

Number of committee members present: 9 Absent: 0

Committee members present (list all, including chair and vice chair): Jeff Commings (chair), Ally Sega (vice chair), Sarah Welch, Leann Rossi, Leo Letendre, Katherine Weathers, Vicki Shu, Laura Dennison, Virgil Chancy, Chris Campbell: Liaison to the National Board

Others present: Kris Wingenroth, Barbara Protzman, Kate Stephenson, Marilyn Fink, Doug Sayles, Michael Moore, Diana Dolan LaMar, Ed Coates, Shari Cruz

Not present: Wilson Josephson: Coaches Committee Liaison, Daniel Paulling: Liaison to the National Office

Minutes

1. Welcome and Announcements. Jeff welcomed people to the call, and apologized for the delayed start. He mentioned that he had accidentally deleted the link for the meeting, and thanked Jessica Reilly for her help in restoring the link so the meeting could take place.

2. Leo motioned to approve the July minutes and Leann seconded the motion. A housekeeping change was made to the minutes to reflect Chris Campbell's term as vice president ending in September. All approved the minutes. All approved, none opposed, no discussion.

3. Jeff gave a year in review for attending guests, mentioning the resignations of Rook Campbell and Martha Arradondo as one of the downsides of the year. He mentioned that the committee didn't have any legislation for the first time since the committee was created.

4. Committee's strategic plan: With the help of Chris Campbell, the committee met in February to create a strategic plan for the coming years. Jeff shared the list of the six goals that the committee came up with and ranked from most important to least important. At the top of the list was "Establishment of a D&I Coordinator/Chair role in all 51 LMSCs," and after mentioning that seven LMSCs already have some sort of person in place, he talked at length about helping the North Dakota D&I Coordinator find a purpose to his role. Each LMSC has different needs, and Jeff said it was his task to find what the North Dakota LMSC lacked in terms of creating an inclusive and diverse environment in USMS activities. Jeff said the other five priorities have not been discussed at length since the committee created the strategic plan but hopes the committee can work on some of them starting in October. Jeff said none of the

objectives have a timeline, specifically saying there is no deadline to establish a D&I Coordinator in all LMSCs.

3. Code of Conduct Webinar: Jeff gave a brief update on the webinar that will be held on November 9 to discuss creating a code of conduct for clubs and LMSCs. He mentioned there has been discussion at the national level about creating a national code of conduct that is likely to be required for all people to read and agree to during the registration process. It was pointed out that USMS President Peter Guadagni has created a task force to look into the creation of this national code of conduct. The November 9 webinar will not be affected by the impending national code of conduct.

4. Diversity and Inclusion Coordinators at the LMSC Level: Ally Sega presented a document that she created with Katherine and Leo that will be sent to LMSC leadership later this year. Ally said the only change in the document since the committee first read it was to fix the name of the role. She also said the tone of the letter was changed to not talk down to those reading it, but sending it to people who understood the inner workings of the organization. Jeff said the next step was to figure out who in each LMSC should receive this letter in addition to the chair.

5. USMS response to concerns regarding summer nationals in Florida: Jeff gave a brief background on the impetus of the USMS statement regarding hosting summer nationals in Sarasota, saying that it began with a few letters from concerned members who were not going to nationals out of fear for their safety in Florida or out of respect for those who were being marginalized by the recent legislation passed by the Florida legislature. Jeff said several members of the D&I committee were copied on one email, which prompted the committee to discuss it at the June meeting. He mentioned that the chief concern of the committee was keeping people safe inside the facility during the meet. There was also a concern that a national response would not have a sense of understanding of the concerned people, or a lack of compassion that would come from a generic USMS statement. Jeff mentioned that he received a statement from CEO Dawson Hughes that would be sent to those who voiced their concerns, and would be posted on the main website for summer nationals. He mentioned that the statement came from the committee, which was unexpected. Discussion continued at the July meeting about a concern regarding first responders who might have the ability to refuse treatment to a person whose lifestyle goes against their beliefs. Jeff told those in attendance that Daniel Paulling reminded members that first responders have a duty to give care to those in need. Jeff said he's heard from people at summer nationals, which had ended its first day on the day of the meeting, that the meet was running incident-free.

6. World Aquatics statement regarding transgender policy: Jeff mentioned the statement that the president of World Aquatics made recently regarding competition for transgender athletes. That policy, which is still in the works, would create an open category for transgender athletes. Jeff said it is likely to spark a look at the current USMS policy, and that the D&I Committee might be asked to provide input. Jeff thanked

the members of the transgender/nonbinary task force, including Vicki, Leo, and Rook. Jeff highlighted Rook's work on creating a report based on the findings of the task force.

9. Chris Campbell Report: Chris mentioned that his term ends in September and that a new VP of Community Services will be elected after the annual meeting. Chris stated that the D&I Committee was created in the same year that he was elected VP, and noted the "undiscovered country" of work that the committee needed to do at the start of their work. He praised the members for helping expand his thinking and viewpoints in the past four years. He understood that members can get disappointed when changes don't happen immediately. He said momentum can make changes happen, but they can take time and asked for patience when barriers are presented. He pointed out that the committee should focus on the 50 percent of people whose minds can be changed on a particular issue or topic. He urged the committee to stay focused on topics at hand.

10. Coaches Committee update: Wilson was unable to attend the meeting, but provided updates via email. Those include: a posting of the video from the webinar discussing coaching adaptive athletes will come soon; applications for mentee coaches is open on a rolling basis instead of a specific window of time; the ALTS committee is working to get an ALTS chair in each LMSC and an ALTS class in Minnesota for refugees.

11. Guest Q&A: Jeff opened the floor to questions from guests in attendance. Marilyn Fink asked about an interpretation of the World Aquatics transgender athlete policy as it would apply to USMS. Jeff agreed that it seems vague, and that the USMS rules committee is still waiting on a more concrete policy from World Aquatics. Leo added that qualifying for the "open" category does not make it an "open" category, and said making it a requirement to bring documentation to qualify for the category might discourage transgender athletes from participating. He also pondered the inherent need for separate heats for the "open" athletes.

Diana Dolan LaMar asked about the expectations about the D&I Coordinator at the LMSC level, and that the needs for an LMSC in one part of the country will be very different from another LMSC. He mentioned the role description that will be sent to LMSC leadership with the letter that shown earlier in the meeting. That role description is found on the USMS website in "LMSC Resources." Ally mentioned that the role description was created based on her work as D&I Coordinator in Connecticut, where the need came from trying to change the location diversity of the board, bringing more adaptive swimmers into the membership, and get younger athletes into Masters swimming. She said she works closely with the board on various decisions made, including the financial decisions made that might impact those in lower-income households.

Doug Sayles asked about the creation of a national code of conduct, and how it differs from the code in the rule book. Jeff said he's unsure how the national code of conduct will look, but that it will be created based on Rule 402. At the LMSC and club level, he said the code of conduct can be molded beyond what the national code of conduct will look like. He followed up with a question of how to make the LMSC leadership be more

diverse, with a person of an underserved background, a person who works in human resources, or an attorney to deal with legal matters. Jeff said the goal is to create leadership that reflects the current membership and the membership each LMSC wants to create.

Jeff urged everyone to attend more committee meetings in conjunction with the annual meeting, and urged anyone interested in being a part of the D&I Committee should complete the delegate survey sent at the end of the annual meeting or send the survey to those interested.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm EDT. Next meeting is October 4, 2023.