

US Chess
Executive Board Meeting
June 8, 2021
Zoom

This document is a summary of the proceedings of this meeting. It includes motions made, action items accepted, and subjects discussed. Details of discussions, etc., may be obtained from the video file online.

OPEN SESSIONS

Tuesday, June 8

Executive Board members present:

Mike Hoffpauir, President

Chuck Unruh, VP of Finance

David Day, Member

David Hater, Member

Randy Bauer, Vice President

Ryan Velez, Secretary

Fun Fong, Member

Carol Meyer, Executive Director

A quorum was established and the meeting was called to order.

Open Session 1

President Hoffpauir opened the meeting by welcoming Executive Board candidates Kevin Pryor and John Fernandez, who were invited to sit in on the meeting since the board has only three open positions and three candidates, one of which is Board Member Randy Bauer. President Hoffpauir made it clear that the visiting candidates would not be voting on any motions but that their input was invited since they also represented the membership.

President Hoffpauir asked of the board members if there were any new conflicts of interest. There were none.

President Hoffpauir then turned the floor over to Secretary Velez to present the first motion.

EB21-080 – Velez – I move we accept the minutes for the May 25 Executive Board meeting.
PASSED 7-0

President Hoffpauir then introduced Hal Terrie, Chair of the US Open Committee, and Boyd Reed, Director of Events, who were present to provide input to the board on the future of the US Open tournament. President Hoffpauir provided background on the ongoing discussions that the Executive Board has been having regarding the US Open, including:

- The issue of low attendance at the event.
- Its status as US Chess's flagship event.
- The possibility of changing the tournament format.

- The constraints of near-term venue contracts.
- Ways to make the event more appealing given the current contracts.
- Longer-term ways to alter the event to make it more appealing.

President Hoffpauir then invited Vice President Bauer to provide his own perspective on the board's history in examining the US Open. He mentioned the following:

- Despite some anomalous years there is a definite downward attendance trend
- Measures that the board has already taken:
 - Made it so that the top US Open finisher qualifies for the US Championship.
 - Expanded the Grand Prix points available.
- The dilemma of not being able to increase the prize fund without a rise in attendance.
- The apparent lack of interest in a week-long event compared to in the past.

President Hoffpauir then asked Director of Events Reed and Executive Director Meyer about the impact that having an event that covers two weekends has on the availability and cost of venues, given that attendance is not usually a limiting factor for venues as it is with larger events.

Director of Events Reed made the following points in response:

- Our event takes up ballroom space that many venues could use for events such as wedding receptions and conferences.
- Chess players don't tend to spend as much on the venue's additional sources of revenue, such as food and drink, which is made up by the venue charging a higher room rate.
- The first two points result in venues being reluctant to rent to us for two weekends at the room rates judged to be reasonable for chess players.
- By shortening the event to one weekend, we should be able to offer lower room rates to participants because the hotel isn't trying to compensate for lost two weekends of frugal guests.
- Shortening the event also creates more options as far as dates.
- Given the points above, he recommended a maximum of 7 days for the tournament.

President Hoffpauir then turned the floor over to Hal Terrie, Chair of the US Open Committee. He shared the following thoughts of the committee:

- They accepted the necessity of changing to a one-week format.
- In the transition leading up to the change to a one-week event (given that contracts for the next 3 years are set), the committee had the following recommendations:
 - To raise the entry fees by \$10.
 - Reducing the prize fund to \$40,000.
 - Not to make the US Open multi-section but to create another side-event that was multi-section using odd class breaks.
 - Additional scholastic side-events would be especially promising in helping offset the costs of the US Open.

Upon being asked for clarification by the president, Mr. Terrie confirmed that going to a one-weekend event would mean going to a 7-day schedule with a 6-day option.

Director Fong asked Mr. Terrie if the number of people playing in both the Invitational events and the US Open was also down. Mr. Terrie indicated that such cross-over participation in was also decreasing and offered his perspective on the reasons for that trend. He mentioned that as an incentive for cross-over play, people entered in the Invitationals could get half off of the US Open entry fee.

President Hoffpauir asked Mr. Terrie if the committee had looked at dividing the US Open into sections. Mr. Terrie shared that a couple of members had offered feasible options for division into sections, but the body of the committee was against dividing it at all.

President Hoffpauir then asked Director of Events Reed if he thought venues with whom we have a contract would be interested in reclaiming one weekend for other events. Director Reed said he wasn't sure whether the venues would be flexible in that regard since he hadn't approached them about it. He added that our events are currently contracted in locales where the summer is not the peak season, such as Palm Springs, which may impact their willingness to change the contract. He agreed it was worth approaching them if the board decided to make the US Open a 7-day event.

Mr. Terrie then confirmed for President Hoffpauir that the Invitationals in a 7-day format would begin on Monday and run through Wednesday, including the awards ceremony. It was discussed how this still allowed them to play in the US Open.

Director of Events Reed added that the Invitationals would have to be shortened to five rounds, which may meet with disapproval from the Scholastic Committee.

President Hoffpauir proposed the following wording as a potential motion and asked for comment:

The Executive Board moves to direct the Executive Director to begin planning for a 7-day schedule for the US Open, commencing with the year 2025 and best efforts be made to negotiate with existing hotel agreements to modify the contracts down to seven days.

The board did not have any objection to that wording.

President Hoffpauir then asked Mr. Terrie if he thought there was anything else that the board should consider before making the motion. Mr. Terrie mentioned the need to consider whether workshops would continue to be held in conjunction with the US Open and if not how the rooms previously allotted to them would be used. This prompted a brief discussion of taking the workshops either partly online or wholly online (as was done in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions) with most who commented agreeing that leaning into online workshops as having

greater potential for exposing people to the governance side of US Chess and of bringing in new people.

President Hoffpauir indicated the final motion would be discussed online between board members before being presented for a vote in the website portal. He expressed the intention of including some language about moving the workshops to an online format as well.

President Hoffpauir thanked Mr. Terrie and his committee for the time and effort they put into providing the board with their insights and recommendations. He also thanked Director of Events Reed for his time and input in the discussion.

President Hoffpauir then introduced the next item on the agenda: Consideration of Online Rating Systems Adjustments. He drew attention to the proposal from the Ratings Committee and Mike Nolan that had been provided to the board and asked if there were any questions or concerns. There was a brief consultation with the Executive Director about the best date for implementation, who indicated June 21 as the date that worked for the key people involved. The motion was then drafted and voted on.

EB21-081 – Board – The Executive Board moves to adopt the Ratings Committee recommendation to recalculate online ratings using the proposal provided by the Ratings Committee and reviewed by the Executive Board on June 8, 2021.

PASSED 7-0

The board then entered closed session.

In the return to open session, President Hoffpauir said there were no motions resulting from closed session.

President Hoffpauir thanked everyone for their participation.

The board will meet again on Tuesday, July 13, 2021.

The meeting adjourned.