



DIAMOND IN THE RUFF

Board of Directors' Reports

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Draft Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the

Board of Directors of District 21 on September 22, 2026



1. Call to Order. President Jim Coke called the regular meeting of the District 21 Board of Directors to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom on the District 21 Zoom account.

2. Roll Call. Secretary Ray Yuenger called the roll by Area. Fifteen of the seventeen Directors were present, constituting a quorum. Present by Area were: Gail Gabiati and Jackie Ortiz (Northwest); Dana Shelley and Kit Morse (West); Lynn Bartz, Stu Goodgold, and Anthony Toto (South); Anne Hollingsworth, Rob Johnson, and Jackie Zayac (East); and Jim Coke, Katherine Ewing, and Donna Neff (Northeast). Both Directors-at-large, Art Mirin and Ray Yuenger, were present. Lynn Bartz joined shortly after the roll was called, and her attendance was noted for the record. Sigrid Price (Northwest) and Max Schireson (West) were absent, but each submitted a written ballot on the proposed amendments of the Bylaws and Election Policy. Also present were guests and committee members, including Tournament co-Chairs Anne Wilson and Brenda Hatton, Bruce Blakely, Jeff Hack, Milind Girkar, and Marion Robertson.

3. Minutes. President Coke called for comments on the minutes of the Board's last meeting. Hearing none, on a motion duly made and seconded, the minutes were approved without amendment. President Coke at first referred to the minutes of the February 3 meeting; it was noted, and the President confirmed, that the minutes before the Board were those of the most recent regular meeting on June 23, 2026.

4. Officers' and Committee Reports. President Coke proposed that the written reports, which had been distributed in advance, be accepted as a group, and asked whether any member wished to discuss a particular report. (The written reports are incorporated by this reference.)

Regional Director. Jackie Z. called the Board's attention to the news that San Francisco will host another NABC in the spring of 2029. It will not be held at the hotel customarily used for San Francisco NABCs, but it will be in San Francisco proper, with the playing space within the hotel rather than in a separate convention center. The contract has not yet been signed, so she could not yet name the hotel. The ACBL expects the San Francisco and Los Angeles contracts to go forward, but a problem with one of the three pending contracts may prevent it from going through. President Coke asked whether it was certain enough for him to begin nominating a tournament chair; Jackie Z. advised waiting until the contract is signed, which she expects by the end of the month, and agreed to contact him on October 1. With the President's permission, Bruce asked whether the event would be in a hotel with its own convention space or in a separate convention center, observing that only two San Francisco hotels can house an NABC and that one of them had been ruled out because of its neighborhood; told that the event would be within the hotel, he said that this may pose a problem. In answer to Stu, Jackie Z. confirmed that San Francisco will host a smaller tournament in the new non-summer NABC format, which begins in the fall of 2028; San Francisco's will be the second of the new-format NABCs. She added that everything else was in her written report.

Hearing no further discussion, the President called for a motion to accept all the reports.

****MOTION PASSED.** On a motion duly made and seconded, the officers' and committee reports were accepted as submitted.



5. New Business.

5A. Proposed Amendments of the Bylaws and Election Policy. Stu, for the Bylaws Committee, presented a slide presentation covering two related motions: an amendment of the Bylaws and a corresponding amendment of the Election Policy. He thanked Jackie Z. for suggesting the change. Under the current Bylaws and Election Policy, the Area Director elections end in mid-December, which members felt was too late because of the holidays. The amendments move the elections about one month earlier. To make future adjustments easier, the specific election dates are removed from the Bylaws and placed only in the Election Policy, which can be amended by a simple majority.

Stu described two principal changes to the Bylaws. First, all details of the election dates are removed, except for the date as of which Unit sizes are determined for the purpose of weighting each Unit's votes; that date moves from November 1 to August 1. August 1 accommodates the earlier election, leaves ample leeway for any future change of dates, and makes little practical difference because Unit sizes change slowly and roughly in parallel. It also lets each Unit know its relative weight within its Area before nominations are made. Second, the reference to one-year terms is removed; those terms were created only to establish staggered elections, and now that one cycle has been completed, all Area Directors will serve two-year terms.

Stu then described the corresponding changes to the Election Policy: (1) Unit 497 (Berkeley/El Cerrito/Richmond), which has merged into Unit 502 (East Bay), is removed from the East Area; (2) Unit sizes will be determined as of August 1 and announced to the Units no later than August 10; (3) Units will vote for Area Directors between October 8 and November 15, rather than between November 10 and December 15; (4) the results will be announced no later than November 20, rather than by the end of the year; (5) references to staggered elections and one-year terms are removed; and (6) the Policy now states that the Northeast, West, and South Areas elect their Directors in odd-numbered years, and the East and Northwest Areas in even-numbered years. He thanked Art for catching a typographical error in the slides.

Ray, a member of both the Bylaws Committee and the Election Committee, noted that the Election Committee had discussed the changes to its duties and that the earlier steps can be taken without difficulty. He also noted that the motions are written to take effect January 1, applying to next year's elections, and that this year's election process is essentially complete in any event. Because three candidates were nominated in each of the East and Northwest Areas, those candidates are deemed elected under the Election Policy. Five incumbents will continue with two-year terms beginning in January, and Art will move from Director-at-large to East Area Director, succeeding Rob; all Northwest Area Directors are returning. He congratulated the reelected Directors: Jackie O., Gail, and Sigrid (Northwest), and Anne H. and Jackie Z. (East).

It was noted that amending the Bylaws requires a two-thirds vote, and that because the motions came as the report of a committee of two or more Board members, they were deemed moved and seconded. The Board voted on the Bylaws amendment first.

****MOTION PASSED.** The Bylaws amendment was adopted unanimously by the Directors present, joined by the written ballots in favor of Max and Sigrid. The amended Bylaws are incorporated by this reference.

The Board then voted on the Election Policy amendment, likewise deemed moved and seconded as a committee report.

****MOTION PASSED.** The Election Policy amendment was adopted unanimously by the Directors present, again joined by the written ballots in favor of Max and Sigrid. The amended Election Policy is incorporated by this reference.

5B. Advisory Council Survey about the Future of Bridge. Anne H., D21's representative on the ACBL Advisory Council, explained that the Advisory Council is asking each district for input on its priorities, which the Council will consolidate into a report to the ACBL Board of Directors at its November meeting. The request, sent through the District President, asks for three priorities in each of three areas: what the ACBL



DIAMOND IN THE RUFF

as a whole should focus on to strengthen the bridge community; the challenges facing the district; and the support the district needs from the ACBL. The response is due to the chair of the Advisory Council before the end of October. President Coke and Ray had suggested using the meeting for an initial discussion, which was recorded. Jackie Z. clarified that this pilot phase is limited to district presidents and seeks a district perspective; the Advisory Council plans a later outreach to the Units. Lynn observed that the intake form is confusing on this point, as it seemed to ask each Advisory Council representative to gather input from their Areas.

Anthony spoke in support of the survey, urging that membership, education, and retention be the top priorities: recruiting new players, including young ones, and keeping the players we have. He described his own continuing efforts to bring bridge into schools in Clovis and suggested that D21's reserves could serve as seed money for local efforts.

Lynn reported that D21 budgets roughly \$28,000 a year for member development and growth—covering youth, newcomers, and subsidies for teachers and speakers—but never spends anywhere near that amount. The problem is not money but finding people to start programs. She noted that the two newcomer events at the last regional (a lunch for 40 with a speaker, and a morning session with coffee and muffins), advertised to all D21 newcomers, were paid for from the growth budget.

Donna described an open house planned in Reno in October, at which existing players will bring newcomers who will receive free plays. Her unit intends to request partial reimbursement from Max, the chair of the Growth and Retention Committee, but there are no established procedures. She now has a flyer and a budget to submit. Lynn confirmed that Max is the proper contact and that expenditures matching the approved budget can be paid. President Coke asked Donna to contact Max and to suggest an allocation for next year as well if the event succeeds. Donna also reported that Reno's pre-pandemic youth program could not be revived because the schools require a sponsoring teacher to be present and none was willing; President Coke, who has taught in elementary, junior high, and high schools, agreed that a sponsoring teacher and classroom are always required and that short lunch periods and over-scheduled students make school programs difficult.

Bruce suggested consulting the Center for Bridge Education in San Francisco, a separate nonprofit (comparable to SiVY) that sponsors a dozen or so young players with after-school meetings at a restaurant, not through the schools. He observed that most of those young players are Asian American boys, which may reflect San Francisco's demographics, and offered to connect interested members with the organizers. Members recalled lunchtime and after-hours bridge groups at Bay Area companies, including Facebook, and Max's pre-pandemic idea of matches between players at high-tech companies, noting that such ideas need a volunteer to carry them forward. Jackie Z. stressed that this work must be done at the local level, and pointed to Patty Tucker's Jumpstart Bridge program in gifted-student programs, now reaching some 40,000 children, for which the ACBL provides free materials to teachers. What is needed is volunteers.

President Coke raised the problem of clubs and Units dying out for lack of people, including teachers and directors. Members, including Rob, observed that directing has become so unpleasant that some qualified directors will not direct. President Coke, a working director, said that most players are appreciative, that directors should deal firmly with the unpleasant few with the support of club managers, and that unpleasant players drive away more players than they are worth, especially inexperienced ones. Members discussed zero-tolerance policies, matchpoint penalties for repeated misbehavior, walking the room, and reading the applicable law from the rulebook at the table. Stu observed that newer players often do not know the rules and are upset when a ruling goes against them; President Coke said that he is more lenient with newer players but always explains the rule. Katherine suggested that the ACBL's teacher training emphasize that club games and tournaments are timed events. Donna called declining membership the "three-alarm fire" facing bridge.

Anne H. stressed communication, suggesting that the district provide a point of contact, or a place on the website, where newcomers can get answers. President Coke described the many requests for lessons and partners that come through a sign-up form on the Sacramento Bridge Center website, noting that such



DIAMOND IN THE RUFF

inquiries need a person to route them to and a list of support people. Jeff, who learned bridge in 1964, recounted a bad early experience at a club and asked to whom he could present his ideas for getting bridge on television; Jackie Z. suggested that he email the Board and the President.

Stu reported that, when he last analyzed membership demographics, both the median and mean ages were rising about one year per year, and are probably now in the high 70s, though his own Unit's average age fell last year. He cautioned that D21 and the ACBL cannot now recruit enough young people to offset losses and should plan for a smaller membership. President Coke responded that he is beginning to see more college-age and younger players, as he wrote in his President's message in the Diamond in the Ruff, and suggested that good publicity could revive interest, as it has for chess.

President Coke said that he had heard what he wanted from members deeply involved in bridge, and that he would compile and distill the discussion over the next week or two, share the draft with Anne H., and then submit it. He asked the Secretary for a transcript of the meeting. Rather than gathering further input from their Areas now, Directors will await the Advisory Council's planned Unit surveys.

Other Business – Naming Rights Policy. President Coke explained that a proposed naming-rights policy had appeared on an earlier version of the agenda but had been dropped because the draft arrived shortly before the meeting and needed review; the Executive Committee will consider it, possibly granting temporary approval. Lynn stressed the policy's urgency: donors are waiting to sponsor or name events, sponsorships could also cover such things as free coffee at a regional, other districts raise money this way, and she has prepared a flyer pricing naming rights for the Monterey regional. Anne W. added that a donor has repeatedly asked to name an event at Monterey. President Coke said that an Executive Committee meeting would be held shortly.

Announcements. Jackie O. asked anyone interested in running for office in the upcoming election to let her know soon. She also reported that her Unit's game in Petaluma draws 14 to 17 tables, perhaps because a free lunch, which she cooks, is served every time.

Next Meeting. President Coke proposed Tuesday, November 10, 2026, at 6:30 p.m., for the Board's budget meeting. It was noted that two Directors have a Unit 507 board meeting that evening beginning at 5:30. In answer to President Coke, Ray explained that a special meeting may be called on shorter notice but is limited to the topics on its agenda, and that pending policies may be placed on that agenda. Lynn and Anne W. will prepare the budget, with Lynn preparing the growth budget in Max's place, and Donna will ask Max to include funding for the Reno newcomer program.

Adjournment. On the motion of Anne W., seconded, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at about 7:40 p.m.