

U.S. Masters Swimming — 2024 Meeting Minutes

Committee Name: Colonies Zones **Session #:** 1
Committee Chair: Douglas Sayles **Vice Chair:** Jeremy Gross
Minutes recorded by: Jill Gellatly & Douglas Sayles **Date/Time:** July 25, 2024, 7 p.m. EDT

USMS BOD Members: CEO Dawson Hughes, Treasurer Jill Gellatly, Colonies Zone At-Large Director Charles Cockrell

Colonies Zone / LMSC Reps: Colonies Zone Chair & NE Membership Coordinator Douglas Sayles, Colonies Zone Vice Chair & DV Chair Jeremy Gross, CT Chair Ally Sega, CT Officer Rob Duguay, DV Vice Chair Steve Dougherty, MD Chair Rand Vaillancourt, MD Vice Chair John Zarkowsky, MR Chair RC Saint-Amour, MR Treasurer Jayne Saint-Amour, NJ Chair Gerald O'Mara, NJ Vice Chair Chris McGiffin, NJ Top Ten Recorder Ed Tsuzuki, NE Chair Jason Weis, NE Vice Chair Ryan Pope, PV Chair Brett LaPlante, PV Sanctions Chair Stephanie Gauzens, VA Chair Caycee Buscaglia.

Absent Zone / LMSC Reps: AD, NI

Minutes:

1) Roll Call / Introductions

- a) The meeting convened at 7:03 p.m. EST.
- b) Doug discussed the purpose of the meeting.
- c) Jill provided some background info, reviewed the agenda, and introduced Charles and Dawson. Dawson emphasized that they are seeking feedback, suggestions, and discussion of the agenda items and any other issues participants want to discuss.

2) College Club Swimming (CCS) – USMS Bridge Membership

- a) Discussed a proposal to reduce the annual USMS bridge membership fee from \$25 to \$0, thereby making every CCS member a USMS bridge member affiliated with their CCS club in the CCS LMSC.
- b) Dawson described some of the potential benefits of having more bridge members and explained that current bridge membership revenue is immaterial and could be partially offset by restructuring CCS fees.
- c) The group was familiar with CCS in part due to the combined 2023 Rhody CCS-USMS meet and USMS bridge members' attendance at Colonies Zone Championships and USMS Nationals.
- d) No concerns raised. Question about how LMSCs can identify and contact local CCS clubs.

3) USMS Membership Fees

- a) USMS has been in a budget deficit since the pandemic and adopted a neutral budget this year, while LMSC reserves now total over \$3 million and in many LMSCs continue to grow well beyond the amount needed to fund the LMSC's annual operating budget and sufficient emergency reserves.
- b) The Finance Committee is evaluating resetting the annual USMS membership fee and LMSC allocation to levels that support LMSCs' needs, ensure the national organization's financial stability, and enable USMS to put that money to work rather than padding LMSC bank accounts: A proposal under consideration would increase the annual membership fee from \$70 to \$73 or \$75 per member for the next three years (below the rate of inflation) and/or reduce the portion of that fee the LMSC receives (currently \$14 per member). Analyses suggest that all but a few LMSCs could absorb these changes; for those LMSCs that need help, the national office may provide grants or other support.
- c) MD said it has had to curtail some local initiatives in recent years, is concerned about any further reduction in LMSC revenue, and would prefer not to have to ask the national office for financial support.
- d) NJ prefers increasing the national membership fee and leaving the LMSC allocation unchanged, citing a potential double whammy of reduced revenue and increased inflation on LMSC finances.
- e) DV asked about LMSC membership fees prior to the national unified fee: 9 LMSCs had fees above \$13 (highest \$21), 24 LMSCs had fees between \$10 and \$13, and 19 LMSCs had fees below \$10 (lowest \$5).

4) Digital SWIMMER Magazine

- a) USMS introduced an updated version of the digital magazine this year and is considering going to a digital-only format or instituting a surcharge for the printed version to help offset its cost. Currently, 40% of members opt for the printed version, a substantial drop from last year.
- b) No major concerns were raised about the digital magazine format. Some participants questioned why new members cannot opt into the print version during the registration process; others said they prefer the print version and read more of the magazine's content when they do not have to log in online.

5) Event Sanction Fees

- a) USMS is considering eliminating event sanction fees: Sanction revenue is immaterial considering the administrative burden it creates, many LMSCs already subsidize sanction fees, and the cost and bureaucratic hurdles are event directors' biggest objections to USMS sanctioning of open water events.
- b) No objections raised to eliminating sanction fees. Discussed the need for one-event membership fees.

6) USMS Annual Meeting Format

- a) The 2024 USMS annual meeting will be held virtually. The board's current plan is to continue alternating by year between virtual-only and hybrid (both virtual and in-person attendance options) annual meetings.
- b) The Legislation Committee chair mentioned that there is a proposal on the legislation docket for this year's annual meeting pertaining to the format of future annual meetings.
- c) Discussed the pros/cons of in-person annual meetings and the changed dynamic now that educational content and LMSC governance best practices are the focus of the annual in-person Volunteer Relay.
- d) CT and VA voiced support for the virtual and hybrid annual meeting formats (versus in-person only).

7) Volunteer Relay & National Coaches Clinic

- a) Holding Relay and the NCC concurrently at the same venue this year is an experiment. USMS will conduct a post-event assessment of whether holding concurrent meetings is worth repeating in the future.
- b) This year NCC registrants can attend any Relay session, but Relay registrants cannot attend NCC sessions, excepting the scheduled combined sessions, meals, and social activities.
- c) CT requested future virtual attendance options for Relay and NCC because many volunteers and coaches involved with college, high school or age-group swimming cannot attend Relay or NCC in person.

8) USMS Board of Directors Meetings

- a) Discussed why the board voted to close its meetings — which included maintaining its ability to communicate to the membership with one voice and directors' desire to hold unfettered conversations without fear of audience members misrepresenting their statements — and whether post-meeting summary memos and meeting minutes provide sufficiently timely and transparent disclosure of the board's deliberations.
- b) CT, MD, and MR prefer open meetings. NE and VA prefer openness and transparency but believe that board meeting accessibility is a policy issue and should not be legislated in the House of Delegates. PV favors closed meetings and noted that audience members are not accountable for how they (mis)represent board deliberations to others.
- c) Dawson noted that moving forward the board may hold pre-meeting forums for USMS volunteers to ask questions and express their opinions about key issues.

9) Miscellaneous

- a) Discussion of Try Masters Swimming. Despite an uptick during Olympic years, membership conversion rates are lower than desired, which may prompt refinements to the TMS program moving forward.
- b) Doug encouraged LMSCs to register unregistered "Masters" programs as USMS clubs or workout groups and to consider subsidizing those club registrations to ensure the programs are listed in Club Finder.
- c) Doug provided an update regarding the status of the 2024-2025 Colonies Zone championship meets and potential USMS Education Weekends within the zone and requested feedback offline.

10) Adjournment

- a) The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.