



MINUTES

of the

2017 Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Division of USA Fencing

The 2017 Annual Meeting (the "Meeting") of the Tennessee Division (the "Division") of USA Fencing ("USAF") was held on Saturday, July 22, 2017, at the Music City Fencing Club, located at 2543R Lebanon Pike, Nashville (Donelson), Tennessee 37214. The initial Notice of the Meeting (the "Notice") had been provided on June 2, 2017 to the Division's club officers, coaches, and other club leaders and administrators. A follow-up Notice, including a suggested agenda guideline for the Meeting, was provided on July 18, 2017, to all Division Members by joint email from USA Fencing and the Tennessee Division. (See **Attachments A and B** hereto).

Twenty-nine Division Members were present at the Meeting, including 16 in-person, 12 by proxy, and one Division officer by video/teleconference. (See **Attachment C** hereto.) A copy of the July 18th Notice, containing the suggested Meeting Agenda, was provided to members at the Meeting to allow them to generally follow the agenda guideline as the Meeting progressed.

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A. Call to Order.

After Secretary/Treasurer Ron Wilson announced that in accordance with the Division's Bylaws, a Quorum was present at the Meeting, Chairman Robert Piraino called the Meeting to order at 2:15 p.m. CDT.

B. Chairman's Opening Remarks and Comments on Old Business.

1. Last Year's Evaluation and Prospects for 2017-18. Chairman Piraino welcomed the Division members to the 2017 Annual Meeting, observing that more members were present at this year's Meeting than had attended prior Meetings in the Division's recent history. He noted that during the 2016-17 Season, more Tennessee Clubs held more tournaments than the prior year and more fencers participated in those tournaments than the prior year. He proudly noted that the Division was well represented at the USA Fencing National Championships held in Salt Lake City earlier this month. He pointed out that several Tennessee fencers, showing even more improvement than they did last year, achieved respectable finishes in the rankings at the National Summer Championships. Congratulations to Maxx Seabury (Music City Fencing Club, Nashville), who placed sixth out of over 180 national fencers in the Division 2 Men's Epee event in Salt Lake City. In addition, approximately 25 Tennessee fencers qualified for the 2017 Junior Olympics, and many of them traveled to participate in the Jr. Olympic tournaments that were held in Kansas City in February this year.

Chairman Piraino announced enthusiastically that the coming season's USA Fencing National Championships will be held in St. Louis, Missouri during the summer of 2018. He encouraged all Clubs and their coaches to work especially hard to prepare as many of their fencers as possible to qualify and participate in the Summer Nationals next year. With St. Louis being so close to Tennessee, Chairman Piraino hopes to set a new record next summer for the number of Tennessee fencers qualifying and participating in the Summer Nationals. Furthermore, with the national Junior Olympics Championship being held in Memphis in February 2018, there are high expectations that Tennessee fencers will work hard early in the season, qualify themselves, and make the best showing ever in the Jr. Olympics this coming February in Memphis.

2. Old Business. Most of the business items from last year's Minutes were completed. However, Chairman Piraino identified a couple of old business plans that had to be postponed: **(1)** "Tennessee Fencing" introductory brochures or packets to be given to new members of all clubs across the State; and **(2)** certificates to be granted to new fencers who had completed their introductory training at their local club. Despite diligent efforts, Chairman Piraino was unable to identify a printer, who would help design and provide the quality product that the Division is seeking, but at a reasonable cost within the means a non-profit organization like the Division. Chairman Piraino intends to continue seeking out a vender who is willing to meet the Division's requirements.

Chairman Piraino recognized that two items discussed at length at last year's Annual Meeting are still not totally settled and therefore were still on his mind and the minds of several of the Division members present at the Meeting: **(1)** Advance scheduling of Tennessee Clubs' sanctioned tournaments for the purposes of *(i)* avoiding as many tournament date conflicts as possible; and *(ii)* encouraging Tennessee clubs to cross-participate in each other's sanctioned tournaments; and **(2)** the likelihood of more rule-making being announced by USA Fencing regarding the mandated use of "numerically rated" referees in all sanctioned local tournaments. The revival of these old business matters regarding the use of rated referees prompted further detailed discussions that are the subject of later Sections of these Minutes, including: the burden of the Division's compliance with any revised rules; and the steps the Division may take to support compliance; e.g., the Division itself and/or the Division's Clubs holding referee clinics during the 2017-18 season. Chairman Piraino proudly noted that during the 2016-17 season, the Division met and exceeded the goal he had set at the 2016 Annual Meeting of doubling the number of rated referees in Tennessee and increasing the numerical ratings of existing Tennessee referees by at least one numeric value.

C. Discussion of the Division's 2016-17 Financial Statement.

At Chairman Piraino's request, Secretary/Treasurer Ron Wilson distributed a draft copy of the Division's 2016-17 Financial Statement to the members present at the Meeting. Through July 22, 2017, the Division had booked total Revenues of \$9,081.90 and total Expenditures of \$6,731.48 during the 2016-17 season. During a brief question and answer period, Secretary/Treasurer Wilson and Chairman Piraino answered members' questions about some of the details regarding certain expense items listed on the Financial Statement, primarily relating to (i) hiring Division tournament referees, and (ii) holding a referee clinic during the 2016-17 Season. Secretary/Treasurer Wilson also explained that a large portion (\$3,762.39) of the Revenues received and booked during the 2016-17 season was attributable to past-due revenue items that had accrued during the 2015-16 and prior Seasons. Thus, in the coming 2017-18 Season the Division will not repeat this large influx of revenue that was attributable to prior years' activities. Secretary/Treasurer Wilson emphasized the importance of recognizing this fact as the Executive Committee attempts to forecast the Division's expenditures for the coming 2017-18 season. (See Subsection D.8 below.)

After Chairman Piraino's opening remarks, comments about old business (some of which comments he allowed members to discuss as he made them), and the question and answer period related to the 2016-17 draft Financial Statement, Chairman Piraino (referring to the suggested agenda that he had included with the July 18th Notice of the Meeting) (*see* **Attachment B** hereto), opened the floor for members to consider and discuss topics listed on the agenda and, later in the Meeting, any other topics that might be on their minds. The most significant of the topics discussed are reflected in the voting actions that were taken during the Meeting (*See* the following Section D of these Minutes).

D. Voting Actions Taken at the Meeting.

Relying generally on the suggested agenda guideline that had been provided to Division members with the July 18th Notice of the Meeting, Chairman Piraino led a long afternoon's discussion of a wide range of topics suggested by the agenda, though not necessarily in the same order as listed on the agenda. Members took voting actions regarding eight of the agenda's discussion points (one action to table for a future decision; two actions to establish committees; and five actions to adopt specific issues). Other give-and-take discussions did not reach the level of a formal membership vote and these are summarized under **Section E** of these Minutes.

The structural purpose of this Section D of these Minutes is to provide in one Section all of the proposed actions that were formally motioned and voted on by Division members. In addition to electing Officers (*see* **Section F** below), the eight voting actions taken at the Meeting were as follows:

1. Use of Division Equipment by Clubs (Voted to Table). Chairman Piraino summarized this issue that has been discussed ongoing for several years. He explained that early last season he created and posted on the Division's website a set of guidelines and protocols for Clubs to follow, if they desired to borrow Division property to hold a tournament or perhaps help a new Club get started until the new Club could purchase its own equipment. Currently the Division owns five full strip set-ups (machine, floor cords, and reels) suitable for gym floors (although one of the set-ups needs repair); one metal-grounded strip; and several other pieces of equipment that Clubs may borrow. (*See* tennesseefencing.org; *Division Resources; Equipment*.) Chairman Piraino explained the complexities of the logistics of transporting strips, particularly the large, heavy metal grounded strip that currently is housed at the Music City Fencing Club in Nashville. He also pointed out the potential conflict if more than one Club wanted to borrow equipment the same weekend as another Club. For discussion, he raised the possibility that the Division could sell its metal grounded strip and purchase several grounded rubber, roll up strips, which are lighter, more easily transported, and suitable for weekend tournaments (but not suitable for permanent daily use). Chairman Piraino also mentioned that modern, lighter strips and computer-based scoring machines may be

available, if at reasonable prices, which could be purchased to phase out the Division's older equipment over time. He also mentioned the maintenance costs for keeping the Division's existing equipment in good working order and always available for the Clubs to borrow. Several members suggested that perhaps Clubs should be charged a modest fee for borrowing Division equipment for their tournaments.

Brad Kroeker and other members noted that much more study and research, particularly transport logistics, possibly selling old and buying newer equipment, cost analysis, etc. is needed before the Division should act on any of the ideas mentioned above. **Brad Kroeker moved that any final action** on revising the Division's equipment lending policies, procedures, sources of funding, and selling old or buying any new equipment **be tabled** until further research and study can be completed and presented to the Division Members or to the Division's Executive Committee. Chairman Piraino would lead this study and research, consulting with members of the Executive Committee and other interested members, such as several of the Division's coaches, who have made equipment decisions for their own clubs in recent years.

In the meantime, Clubs should continue relying on the lending protocols for the Division's current equipment that are posted on the Division's website. (*See tennesseedivision.org; Division Resources; Equipment.*)

Motion to Table. Brad Kroeker

Second: Joe Oliverius

Voting Results: Unanimously tabled as described.

2. Charging a \$10 fee for Clubs to borrow a Division-owned strip for a tournament.

Until the comprehensive tabled motion described above can be developed and considered at a later date, as a stopgap measure to help defray the costs of maintaining Division equipment, **a motion was made that** the Division charge Clubs a modest \$10 use fee per tournament when a Club borrows a Division strip.

Motion: Joe Oliverius

Second: Robert Szokolay

Voting Result: Unanimously adopted.

3. Location for Division's Summer National and Jr. Olympic Qualifying Tournaments, 2017-18.

A long discussion about the necessity for promptly finalizing Division Clubs' 2017-18 tournament schedules was lead by Chairman Piraino. That discussion is summarized under Section E.1 of these Minutes, because no membership vote was necessary for the bulk of that discussion. However, one action related to the Division's own scheduling of its two qualifying tournaments did arise in the midst of the overall discussion, and a membership vote was required to resolve it.

The Division realizes the logistical difficulties faced by Tennessee fencers and their coaches when trying to travel among the three regions of the State to participate in Division sanctioned tournaments held by other Clubs across the State. These same difficulties also arise as related to the Division's two annual qualifying tournaments: Junior Olympics and Summer Nationals. The western Memphis area and the eastern Knoxville-Chattanooga area are at least 6-7 driving hours away from one another by automobile. And an overnight hotel stay plus other travel expenses are often required. The Nashville area is in the middle of the State, but the drive is still 3-4 hours between Nashville and the other two geographic locations of the State where Club tournaments are typically held. Chairman Piraino (whose own club is in Nashville) explained that he is well aware that as Division Chairman, he is responsible (as well as personally sympathetic) for making the Division's qualifying tournaments available to as many Tennessee fencers across the State as is reasonably possible. Members from all three of the State's three primary geographic fencing areas were present at the Meeting and there was a consensus that the Division's qualifying tournaments should be moved around the State from year to year to accommodate as many fencers as possible. A lively discussion among the members could not reach an informal consensus

regarding at which location the Division's 2017-18 qualifiers should be held. Several forms of motions were considered, but **the final form of motion**, as put before the members, was a "YES" or "NO" vote on: "That the Division's 2017-18 Junior Olympics qualifier be held in Memphis; and the Summer Nationals qualifier be held in Nashville."

Motion: Will Curtis

Second: Sergey Petrosyan

Voting Result: Adopted by 24 "YES" votes; remaining members voted "NO" or abstained.

4. No Change to Division's Sanctioning Fees. Effective initially for the 2015-16 season, the Division instituted a fee related to Clubs seeking sanctioning by the Division for their tournaments. (The Division's sanctioning of tournaments is required by USA Fencing to maintain consistent standards and enable fencers to be rated.) While the new fee was slow to be implemented during the 2015-16 season, by the end of the 2016-17 season, the Division's invoice system had been improved and Clubs generally worked hard to pay their sanctioning fees timely. Sanctioning fees have become one of the Division's most important sources of funds used to conduct its business, conduct qualifying tournaments, hold referee training programs, maintain equipment, and otherwise promote and improve the quality of fencing in Tennessee. A relatively brief discussion by members at the Meeting addressed whether sanctioning fees should continue as is, be increased, or perhaps even reduced. Following the discussion, **a motion was made that** the Division's sanctioning fee program be continued as is with no change in rate or procedures. Sanctioning fee rates and procedures can be found on the Division's website. (*See tennesseefencing.org; Division Resources; Tournaments; Division Sanctioning Fees.*)

Motion: Brad Kroeker

Second: Will Curtis

Voting Result: Adopted by 25 "YES" votes; remaining members voted "NO" or abstained.

5. Division Authorized to Hold One Coach's Clinic during 2017-18 Season. One of the agenda items prompted a lot of discussion about what the Division should, and/or could, do to develop the overall quality of coaches and referees, who coach fencers or officiate tournaments (sometimes both) in the Tennessee Division. (NOTE: the topic of coaching is discussed in this subsection; a refereeing topic is discussed in the next subsection [voting action] and other referee-related topics are discussed under Section E.2 [non-voting actions] of these Minutes.)

Chairman Piraino asked if members at the Meeting had any interest in the Division taking the lead, including possibly using some of the Division's funds, to find and encourage interested persons in the State who want to become fencing coaches, and also helping interested high school sports coaches (perhaps already coaching other non-team sports) to broaden their knowledge-base by acquiring basic fencing coaching skills. Chairman Piraino explained that prior to his coming to Tennessee, his experience as both a fencer and a coach indicated that there was a direct relationship between (a) developing and maintaining a constant stream of well-trained young coaches and providing advanced training for experienced coaches to improve their skills, and (b) the quality of the overall level of fencing and the success of individual fencers in a given area. Members at the Meeting were receptive to this concept, and although no formal motion was presented, members informally encouraged Chairman Piraino to pursue the idea by seeking input from the Division's experienced coaches, such as Brad Kroeker, Sergey Petrosyan; Chris Cheney; Stuart Bernstein, Eric Howard; Kristin & Michael Vines; and others. Chairman Piraino's task is to research and study the details regarding the level of interest that may exist for developing potential coaches in Tennessee; the costs involved to help train them; methods of funding; logistics; and the availability and willingness of Master Coaches to come to Tennessee and hold Coach's Clinics.

Although there is much work to be done and many details to be developed, **a motion was made that** as a jump-start into the possibility of creating an eventual comprehensive coaching development program, "the Division should sponsor and promote one Coach's Clinic during the 2017-18 season." Although not expressly stated in the formal motion, it was implied by the limited scope of the motion that the development of this idea by Chairman Piraino and other interested Division members must be completed

and a reasonable plan formulated, before a motion to adopt a comprehensive coaching development program, sponsored by the Division, could be considered by the Division.

Motion: Joe Oliverius

Second: Daniel Morrell

Voting Result: Unanimously adopted.

6. Standard Compensation Plan for Division Tournament Referees.

Introduction. The topic of referees and refereeing generated the broadest and most time-consuming discussions on the Meeting's agenda. The expenditure items listed on the Division's Financial Statement that were related to (i) referees' fees and expenses in connection with the Division's qualifying tournaments; and (ii) the expenses related to the Referee Clinic held by the Division in October 2016, triggered a high degree of interest and discussion among Members, not only as related to the Financial Statement itself, but also to the broad topic of referees and refereeing in general. This extensive discussion resulted in only one voting action, which related to a proposed minimum referee compensation plan, which is described below in this subsection. The other non-voting portions of the referee and refereeing discussions are summarized in **Section E.2** of these Minutes.

Chairman Piraino recognized Will Curtis, the Division's Referee Coordinator, to present his proposal for standardizing the minimum compensation paid to referees, who officiate at Tennessee Division tournaments. It was accepted that: referees and other paid officials perform a vital function at tournaments; they are highly trained (or should be); and they spend a lot of time in training and traveling that is not seen on tournament day. Plus, USAF has raised, and will continue raising, the standards for referees and other paid tournament officials. Thus, skilled and rated referees should be paid fair and reasonable fees for their services, and reimbursed at least some portion of the reasonable expenses they incur in providing these services.

Coordinator Curtis's written proposal had been posted on the Division's website on June 26, 2017. (*See, tennessee fencing.org; News and Updates; TN Division Referee Compensation Plan Proposal*). He read portions of his written proposal for the Meeting and summarized other portions, explaining the sources of his research and rationale for his recommendations. It should be noted that many of the Division members attending the Meeting were themselves either rated referees, club owners, coaches, club managers or held (or have held during their fencing careers) all of these positions. Plus, several of them also were highly rated fencers in their own right. Thus, the interest in the overall state of refereeing in the Tennessee Division was very high. Although Coordinator Curtis's proposal was well received by members, nevertheless many questions were raised regarding the details of implementing such a plan: (i) the scope of the plan's applicability (e.g., applies only to Division qualifying tournaments or to *all* sanctioned tournaments held in Tennessee); (ii) the enforceability of such a plan (e.g., mandated for all tournaments or only for Division qualifying tournaments, but at the same time serving as a published and highly recommended guideline for *all* tournaments); and (iii) clarifying the precise definitions of certain key terms that could have a significant practical impact on the implementation of such a plan (e.g., "event" and "half-day"). As the discussion of the specific points of a referee compensation plan continued, it became apparent that the members as a group would not be able to reach a consensus.

Therefore, **a motion was presented to:** "Form a special committee, consisting of Chairman Piraino, Coordinator Curtis, and Vice-Chair Oliverius, who may select other appropriate members to participate on the committee, and/or may engage other members as consultants, for the purpose of carefully analyzing Coordinator Curtis's "Tennessee Division Referee Compensation Plan Proposal" and, based on the ideas discussed by members at the Meeting and other relevant considerations, revise Coordinator Curtis's proposal by developing further working details, precisely defining critical terms, and creating other practical provisions that would allow a comprehensive Referee Compensation Plan to be adopted by the Division that could: (i) be implemented fairly and equitably for Division qualifying tournaments; and (ii) serve as a strongly recommended guideline, though non-binding, Division policy for all other sanctioned tournaments held within the Division."

Motion: Will Curtis

Second: Joe Oliverius

Voting Results: Adopted by 28 “YES” votes with one abstention.

7. Developing a State-Wide High School Fencing League. Chairman Piraino expressed his vision for developing the popularity and life-long participation in competitive fencing in the State of Tennessee. He presented an enthusiastic description of how high school fencing leagues in the New York area played a huge roll in his development as a fencing athlete in high school and later as a successful high school fencing coach. He outlined the structure of how a successful high school league program should be developed and he cited the proven benefits that come from teaching competitive fencing at the high school level and holding frequent tournaments. Well trained and competition-savvy young fencers often carry their interest in fencing to college, where scholarships are available, and these fencers tend to remain interested in local fencing activities well into adulthood.

Chairman Piraino noted that several fencing programs in Tennessee are already focusing on training high school-aged fencing athletes, such as the Memphis University School Fencing Team and Christian Brothers High School, both in Memphis; and the Baylor School in Chattanooga. His plan would start by reaching out to the coaches and administrators of these existing programs as models and then help start-up programs and grow other potential high school programs in Middle Tennessee (particularly in the growing Nashville area) and throughout the State. Eventually the goal is to grow into a genuine Tennessee High School Fencing League, complete with school vs. school competitions and statewide high school team championships.

Chairman Piraino expressed that his vision of a Tennessee high school fencing league would require extensive planning and an extraordinary amount of work and persistence over a long period of time. Before spending his personal time and any of his Division Chairman time, developing this idea, he wanted to determine whether the membership of the Division would support pursuing a high school fencing league in Tennessee. Members at the meeting immediately grasped the overall benefits that a state-wide high school fencing league could bring to Tennessee fencing and appeared overwhelmingly positive about the idea. However, there was reluctance at this time to specifically commit Division funds or to set a timetable for forming a high school fencing league in Tennessee. Nevertheless, **a motion was made to:** “(i) authorize Chairman Piraino to devote some of his Division Chairman time in exploring the feasibility of this idea; (ii) form a Division committee consisting of himself, Will Curtis, and Brad Kroeker, and working through the committee, consult with other Division members who are currently involved with high school programs; and (iii) study the idea, and design a workable, cost effective, and reasonable plan that the Division could support.”

Motion: Joe Oliverius

Second: Brad Kroeker

Voting Results: Unanimously adopted.

8. 2017-18 Budget. Secretary/Treasurer Wilson explained that customarily a proposed annual budget is presented at each Division Annual Meeting that reasonably projects anticipated revenues and expenses for the coming year, as well as provide reasonable funding estimates and revenue potential for any special projects being considered for the coming year. However, Mr. Wilson reported that because careful record-keeping practices for the Division’s finances had been neglected for several years prior to the 2016-17 Season (during which time it appears that no annual budgets were produced), the Division has only one year of reasonably accurate and reliable records that tracked the Division’s finances during the 2016-17 Season. Therefore, Mr. Wilson explained that he had decided to postpone preparing and presenting an anticipatory budget until at least one more year of accurate financial records could be accumulated and a second year of the Division’s activities be recorded, observed, and analyzed.

Initially, members at the Meeting accepted Mr. Wilson’s premise to wait-and-see at least one more year of Division activity and financial experience before attempting to present a meaningful budget guideline for the next coming season. But upon further discussion, some members noted that the Division had been more engaged, and had pursued more projects to improve Tennessee fencing during the last couple of

seasons than ever before. Brad Kroeker noted that several never-before-done old projects from last year, plus a few new projects for the coming year, were all being contemplated for the 2017-18 Season. In addition, members recalled from the discussion of the 2016-17 Financial Statement that during that season the Division's expenditures exceeded its revenues that were attributed solely to 2016-17 activities. This expenditure vs. revenue shortfall caused no financial harm to the Division, because during that year the Division received a large sum of not-to-be-repeated revenues, that were attributable to prior seasons.

Therefore, **Mr. Kroeker motioned that** early in the 2017-18 Season, Secretary/Treasurer Wilson (i) revisit the Division's revenues, expenses, and activities from 2016-17; (ii) based on that one year's history, estimate the expected sources and amounts of revenues and expenses that the Division is likely to incur during 2017-18, as well as consider the cost of any new activities being contemplated for 2017-18; and (iii) produce a suggested budget for 2017-18. While Mr. Wilson would research last year's financial records and draft a 2017-18 Budget, the Division's newly elected Executive Committee would discuss and negotiate the details of the Budget, especially in relation to assigning estimated costs to each of the non-routine expenditures anticipated for 2017-18.

Motion: Brad Kroeker

Second: Joe Oliverius

Voting Results: Adopted by 28 "YES" votes, with one "NO" vote.

E. New Business Discussed (No Voting Actions)

Under this Section E, there is a summary description of three very broad key topics that were addressed during the Meeting, but no vote of the Division's members was taken in relation to these matters. Nevertheless, these matters could have a significant impact on the Division's oversight and administrative responsibilities related to Tennessee fencing.

1. Scheduling Division tournaments: coordination; forms; regional tournaments; etc.

Chairman Piraino explained the need for all Tennessee Clubs, who have not already done so, to please submit their tournament scheduling requests to him as soon as possible. He noted that the Georgia and Kentucky divisions, both of which have active and robust sanctioned tournament activity throughout their respective seasons, have already proposed their schedules for the 2017-18 season, even though the opening of the season (August 1, 2017) is still more than a week away. His goal is to reach the point where Tennessee clubs will do the same thing. Chairman Piraino explained that for the good of the Division, its fencers, and its programs, when possible he must juggle sanctioned tournaments in a manner that provides Tennessee fencers the opportunity to participate in as many tournaments as possible across the State. The sooner all Clubs make their requests for tournament dates known to him, the more likely he can accommodate most requests, even when some conflict avoidance negotiations among the Clubs must be coordinated. Chairman Piraino observed that fencing itself is not the only activity that impacts his juggling tournament dates; e.g., school holiday breaks; exam periods; semester breaks; traditional holiday seasons; local sports and other community events, all take their toll on the availability of weekend dates for scheduling fencing tournaments.

In addition to Tennessee tournaments, Chairman Piraino noted that one of his personal goals is to schedule Tennessee tournaments in a manner that will allow more Tennessee Clubs and their coaches to encourage their fencers to travel outside the state and compete in relatively near-by Regional Youth Circuits (RYCs), Super Youth Circuits (SYCs), Regional Junior Cadet Circuits (RJCCs), and Regional Open Circuits (ROCs.) He pointed out that not only would participation by Tennessee fencers in regional events improve their skills and competition savvy, but also provide alternative ways for fencers to qualify for the Jr. Olympics and Summer Nationals, other than just relying solely on how well they perform on any given day in the Division's qualifying tournaments. He explained that by participating in regional tournaments, fencers are able to accumulate qualification points over several months of competition, and not have to rely solely on the Division's one-time specific

qualification tournaments to qualify for national tournaments.

To achieve the scheduling discipline envisioned by Chairman Piraino, he told members that during the coming year, he intends to create a more structured process for setting the Division's tournament dates early, perhaps as early as June, prior to the next season starting on August 1st each year. He added that such early scheduling will not be inflexible and as the season progresses, Clubs can come back to him and add tournaments when an opportunity presents itself, or reschedule existing tournament dates when an unexpected conflict arises or for other good cause.

Chairman Piraino plans to create comprehensive tournament protocol scheduling forms and he will post the forms on the Division's website for Clubs to use. His protocols would not only schedule the tournament dates themselves, but also provide Clubs other detailed requirements related to holding sanctioned tournaments; such as: (i) USAF's rated referee requirements, in the never-ending environment of USAF constantly tweaking the requirements, sometimes in mid-year; (ii) reminder of the Division's sanctioning fee rate, procedures, and deadlines for payments; (iii) considering whether Division equipment will be needed and transported to the tournament site; and (iv) other tournament-related details that sometimes are not focused on until just a couple of weeks before a tournament.

2. Referees and Refereeing. The following is a summary of the most significant observations, comments, and suggestions that Members discussed regarding this complex and lengthy topic:

a. Division's Referee Clinic Expenses during 2016-17 exceeded the Clinic's revenues. Joe Oliverius observed from the Financial Statement that the Division's Referee Clinic last year did not generate enough revenue to totally offset the expenses of the Clinic. The Chairman and Executive Committee should do their best to structure the funding of any Referee Clinic(s) held by the Division during the 2017-18 season to at least break-even between the Clinic's cost and the revenue it generates.

b. Consider inviting non-Tennessee attendees to Division Referee Clinic(s). Will Curtis suggested that if a Division Referee Clinic were held in the Knoxville-Chattanooga area, then perhaps it would draw attendees from other near-by active fencing divisions, such as Georgia and North Carolina. Another member added that perhaps out-of-division attendees could be charged a higher fee than Tennessee Division attendees to help offset the cost of the Clinic.

c. USAF Referee Rating Requirements; Anticipated Tennessee Referee Clinics. Before Chairman Piraino summarized USAF's referee rating requirements as related to sanctioned tournaments, he noted that there seems to be some degree of misunderstanding and misconception regarding the terminology that describes the status of referees. As a courtesy to members present at the Meeting, he offered a summary review of that terminology as follows:

Rated Referee. Refers to a person who has (i) completed a referee clinic/seminar; (ii) successfully passed the referee written exam; (iii) has been observed in a live tournament; and (iv) has been assigned a numerical rating from 1 to 10. Sometimes this type of referee is referred to as a "**numerically rated**" or simply a "**rated**" referee.

"P" Designation. The "P" designation is not a rating. It refers to a person who has completed a referee clinic/seminar and successfully passed the referee written exam, but who has not yet been observed in a live tournament and assigned a numerical rating. Sometimes a person with the "P" designation may be referred to as being *certified*, which may incorrectly imply that the person has been rated. The "P" stands for "passed," referring only to the written referee exam, not a rating.

Chairman Piraino explained that currently USAF requires at least one rated referee to be present at a tournament in order for that tournament to be sanctioned. All referees officiating at a sanctioned tournament, whether or not rated, must have successfully completed the Safe Sport course and undergone a background check; unless that person is under 18 years of age or is fencing in the tournament him or herself. However, Chairman Piraino also cautioned that while he has not yet heard anything official, he believes that USAF administrators are continuing to be very active in pushing to upgrade USAF

requirements for the number of rated referees and the numerical level of the rated referees that USAF may require for local division tournaments to be sanctioned. While he generally agrees with raising the standards for referees, Chairman Piraino is concerned that USAF may announce increases to their mandated referee ratings on very short notice, maybe even as soon as mid-year during the 2017-18 season. He intends to do all he can, as soon as he can, within the Division's resources, to develop skilled referees in Tennessee and increase the quality of refereeing for all tournaments held within the State. To that end, Chairman Piraino noted that (i) the Memphis University School Fencing Club has already scheduled one Referee Clinic (and will bear its cost) this coming season; and (ii) he intends for the Division to also hold at least one Referee Clinic during the season, subject to the cost considerations that members had discussed earlier in the Meeting.

d. Administrative difficulties to increase personal referee ratings. Several Division members at the Meeting (including Chairman Piraino), who themselves are rated referees, described at length the difficulty they have had in the recent past, and are still having, in documenting and getting their numerical ratings increased by USAF, even after they have successfully completed a referee clinic or satisfied other rating increase requirements and notified USAF. Chairman Piraino described his personal difficulty in getting not only his referee rating increased, but also simply updating his personal information in the referee database. Chairman Piraino explained that currently USAF does not maintain its own database to track referee information. Instead, an outside party administers a referee database, but it appears that such third party is not highly motivated to keep the information updated, and presumably does not devote enough resources to properly maintain this important and critical source of information. Chairman Piraino says that USAF officials are fully aware of this problem and are working internally to adopt their own national referee database and begin maintaining it themselves timely and accurately.

3. Expansion opportunities for actively promoting Tennessee fencing, statewide and nationally.

Chairman Piraino recognized that circumstances have arisen that would give the Division an opportunity to promote Tennessee fencing on a broad basis. He discussed two of these opportunities.

a. National Junior Olympics to be held in Memphis, February 2018. Prior to the Division's Annual Meeting, USA Fencing had announced that its Junior Olympics National Championships would be held in Memphis on February 16-19, 2018 at the Memphis Cook Convention Center Cannon Center. This blockbuster national fencing event not only rightly recognizes the hard work and success of the Memphis University School and other Memphis-area fencing programs (and indirectly, MUS's now renovated and state of the art competitive fencing facility), it also can shine the spotlight on the Tennessee Division itself. Chairman Piraino emphasized in clear terms that this opportunity to promote Tennessee fencing, even beyond the Memphis area, should not go unnoticed. He strongly advised that the Division seize this opportunity, not only to promote the local fencing programs in the Memphis area, but also to inform the Tennessee and national audiences about the fencing opportunities that are available right here in our State. Issuing press releases; putting on fencing demonstrations; and creating a joint Memphis/Tennessee promotional website were among the ideas he suggested.

Members at the Meeting expressed enthusiastic support for Chairman Piraino's commitment to do all he can personally and, subject to budget constraints, possibly commit reasonable resources from the Division to launch an all-Tennessee fencing promotional campaign, not only in the Memphis area, but also other selected areas throughout the State. Despite the members' enthusiastic support for Chairman's Piraino's promotional ideas and his commitment of his personal time as Chairman to pursue this project, a motion to authorize an amount of Division funding to support this project was not made. The reasoned judgment and conservative discretion of Chairman Piraino, with input from the other members of the 2017-18 Executive Committee, will guide the Division's efforts to promote Tennessee fencing in the context of USA Fencing's 2018 National Junior Olympics Championships in Memphis.

Important Post-Meeting Communication: After the July 22nd Meeting, on August 2, 2017, Chairman Piraino received a direct communication from Christine Strong Simmons, Senior Director of Operations of USA Fencing in Colorado Springs, CO. Ms. Simmons said, “We are excited to bring [the Jr. Olympics] Championship competition to Memphis, TN and sincerely hope that the Tennessee Division will be part of making this event successful.” Chairman Piraino responded, “We think this is a fantastic opportunity to showcase our sport within Tennessee. Please let me know how we can be a part of the planning [and other activities] for this event.”

b. Hosting Regional Tournaments in Tennessee. As an expansion of Chairman Piraino’s earlier discussion that he tries to consider near-by locations and dates of out-of-state regional tournaments, when juggling the Tennessee tournament calendar, he posed a rhetorical question to the Meeting members: “In the not too distant future, why shouldn’t Tennessee Clubs start placing bids to host regional and even national level events, such as RYC, RJCC, and ROC, right here in Tennessee?” Chairman Piraino’s response to his own question was that with some dedication, hard work, and planning, there is no prohibitive reason why Tennessee clubs could not do this. He expressed his hope that at some point, the Division would be in a position to partner with interested Club administrators; local Tennessee organizations; and national and regional fencing equipment vendors to achieve this goal. He suggested that the 2018-19 season would not be too soon to consider holding at least one regional tournament within Tennessee.

F. Election of 2017-18 Officers.

In accordance with ARTICLE IV of the Division’s Bylaws, four Officers were elected (or re-elected) at the Meeting. Chairman Robert Piraino, 2nd Vice-Chairman Joe Oliverius, and Secretary/Treasurer Ron Wilson each indicated at the Meeting that they would be willing to serve another annual term in their respective positions. 1st Vice-Chairman Tom Knowles (speaking from Memphis via video/teleconference phone) indicated that he too would be willing to serve another annual term, provided no other member was interested in, or was nominated for, the 1st Vice-Chairman position. Upon inquiry from Chairman Piraino, Robert (Skip) Aymett announced to the Meeting that he was interested in serving in the 1st Vice-Chairman position for the coming year. Upon hearing Skip express his interest in the position, Tom withdrew his name from consideration to serve a second term. In accordance with ARTICLE VII, SECTION 1 of the Bylaws, Chairman Piraino opened the floor for additional officer nominations. There were none. With no opposition expressed, Secretary Wilson moved that the entire slate of unopposed candidates be elected with one vote. Will Curtis seconded Ron’s motion, and Chairman Piraino called for the vote. The vote was unanimous, resulting in the following Officers being elected (or re-elected) for the 2017-18 Season:

Chairman – Robert Piraino (Music City Fencing Club)

1st Vice Chair – Robert (Skip) Aymett (Memphis University School Fencing Club)

2nd Vice Chair – Joseph Oliverius (Music City Fencing Club)

Secretary/Treasurer – Ron Wilson (Cumberland d’Escrime)

In accordance with ARTICLE IV of the Bylaws, these officers will serve through the Division’s next annual Meeting in 2018; or until their resignation; or until otherwise removed from their position in accordance with ARTICLE IV, SECTIONS 6 or 7 of the Bylaws.

G. Adjournment.

After elections, Chairman Piraino opened the floor for any further new business that members wanted to discuss, regardless whether the topic had appeared on the suggested agenda. Hearing no new business or any old business being brought up, Will Curtis moved to adjourn the Meeting, which motion was seconded by Secretary/Treasurer Wilson. Chairman Piraino thanked everyone for taking the time to come and participate in what turned out to be a rather long and tiring Annual Meeting. Hearing no objection, he adjourned the Meeting at 6:35 p.m. CDT.

H. Attachments to these Minutes. Copies of these Attachments are available upon request to the Division's Secretary/Treasurer. Please email requests to *tennesseefencing@gmail.com*.

Attachments A & B: Notices. Initial and Follow-Up Notices of the 2017 Annual Meeting, delivered to Division members by email on June 2 and July 18, 2017, respectively.

Attachment C: Attendance. Names of Members, who attended the Meeting in person, by proxy, or by video/teleconference.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald F. Wilson

[The physically signed original of these Minutes is maintained in the Tennessee Division's permanent records.]

Ronald F. Wilson
Secretary/Treasurer
Tennessee Division of USA Fencing
August 9, 2017

Final as posted on Division website.