



**MINUTES**  
of the  
**2020 Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Division of USA Fencing**

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**NOTE:** The topics discussed and actions taken during the Meeting are not necessarily reported in the same sequence in which they occurred during the Meeting. For presentation in these Minutes, multiple discussions of the same or similar topics that were discussed at different times throughout the Meeting have been consolidated under a single appropriate topic heading.

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**MINUTES**  
of the  
**2020 Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Division of USA Fencing**

The 2020 Annual Meeting (the “Meeting”) of the Tennessee Division (the “Division”) of USA Fencing (“USAF”) was held on Friday, July 31, 2020, through an on-line connection with the Zoom video conferencing platform. Division Members from various locations throughout the State pre-registered themselves through the ZOOM system and attended the Meeting virtually. Division Chairman Robert Piraino hosted the Meeting from Nashville, Tennessee.

**A. NOTICES.**

The initial Notice of the Meeting (the “Notice”) was provided to Division Members (“Members”) on July 14, 2020, by a joint email blast from the Division and USA Fencing. The Notice provided links to a Zoom meeting registration form, and to a proxy voting form for Members who could not participate in the Meeting. The Notice encouraged all eligible Division voters, who could, to participate in the Division’s first on-line virtual Meeting. The Notice announced that the Division’s officers for the 2020-21 Season would be elected at the Meeting and it reminded members about USAF’s rules and deadlines that established voter eligibility. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, reminder notices were posted on Facebook and on the Division’s webpage. A final reminder notice was sent to Members by email on July 28<sup>th</sup>. Each of the reminder notices contained electronic links to a Zoom registration form and a proxy voting form. (See **Attachments A1, A2, A3, and A4.**)

**B. CALL TO ORDER.**

At the request of Chairman Piraino, Secretary Ron Wilson confirmed that a quorum was present at the Meeting, either in person or by proxy. Chairman Piraino called the Annual Meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. CDT.

**C. CHAIRMAN’S OPENING REMARKS AND COVID-19 DISCUSSION IN LIEU OF NEW BUSINESS.**

Chairman Piraino welcomed Members to the 2020 Annual Meeting and thanked them for pre-registering with Zoom so they could participate in the Division’s first-ever on-line virtual meeting. He noted that the convenient on-line format for the Meeting had resulted in a larger turnout than the Division has experienced in the last several years. He also observed that the Members present represented a cross-section of the diverse types of fencing programs that currently are operating in Tennessee, including private clubs; a community education program; a long-standing and competitively successful high school team program; and a student sports club program operating on the campus of the University of Tennessee.

Chairman Piraino presented no New Business and no new business was brought before the Meeting from the on-line Members. In effect, the “New Business” for this Meeting consisted of a three-topic discussion lead by Chairman Piraino with Members sharing their experiences related to surviving the continuing COVID-19 shutdown since March 2020, and exchanging ideas with the Chairman and other Members regarding any plans they have made, and the challenges they face, to remain viable during the remaining COVID-19 shutdown and the efforts they are making to return to fencing training and competition during the coming Season.

**1. How have fencing programs across Tennessee handled their survival since the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020?**

The universal answer to this question was that every program of any administrative type across the State simply closed down abruptly in March as mandated by governmental authorities, USA Fencing, and the various governing bodies that oversee school, university, and community education fencing programs. For example, Chairman Piraino explained that for his privately-owned Music City Fencing Club, in Nashville, he canceled not only all the remaining tournaments he had intended to host during the rest of the Season (including Division-level qualifying tournaments), but he also had to close down all training and practice bouts activity at his Club, literally overnight. Head Coach Michael Vines at Baylor School in Chatanooga said his high school fencing team was about to participate in their annual league championship tournament, but it

was cancelled immediately. Kathryn Creveling, President of the UT-Knoxville Fencing Club and Donovan Grimwood, whose Cumberland d'Esclime Club sponsors and teaches primarily introductory fencing through the Nashville Community Education ("NCE") program in Nashville, both reported that their oversight organizations immediately canceled all fencing activity until further notice. Unfortunately, Mr. Grimwood had to cancel the first sanctioned tournament that his program had planned to host in several years.

As an example of a private club following USAF's guidelines and local government requirements, under Phase 2 of Nashville's general business reopening protocols, on June 1<sup>st</sup> Music City Fencing Club, enforcing very restrictive safety protocols, was permitted to begin limited and controlled private lessons and practice bouts among one coach and a block of 3-4 fencers, lasting no more than 60 minutes per day for each different block. As owner of a private Club, Chairman Piraino has taken advantage of this minimal in-person training opportunity that was permitted under the local COVID-19 regulations that were applicable to gyms and athletic clubs in the Nashville area. Also, by the end of March, he and his coaching staff had established virtual group classes through Zoom for continuing technical fencing skills and conditioning training six evenings per week. The other representatives at the Meeting said directly, or implied, that the timing of their potential return to fencing, rather than being controlled exclusively by USAF and local governmental COVID-19 requirements, were primarily tied to a start date that corresponded with the beginning of their organization's fall academic calendars, and subject to protocol requirements that might be imposed by their oversight organizations. (*See next topic.*)

## **2. How are you looking forward to, planning, training, and scheduling for returning to competition during the 2020-21 Season?**

In addition to USAF Guidelines and local restrictions that are universally applicable to all Tennessee fencing programs, the representatives at the Meeting of fencing programs that are subject to school, university, or community education oversight have been or soon will be discussing with their organizations regarding the scheduling, restrictions, safety protocols, etc. that they must establish in order to return to training and ultimately to tournament competition. Some of the representatives pointed out unique hurdles that not all fencing programs in Tennessee will need to face, but that in their particular situation could significantly affect their return to "normal" fencing activities. For example:

**Large University Student Fencing Club.** Ms. Creveling at UT-Knox described how her student fencing club operates within a huge student body (almost 30,000 students according to UT's website) and her fencing club is only one of over 40 other student sports clubs (per UT's website, plus hundreds of other student clubs and organizations). Thus, along with USAF Guidelines and Division recommendations generally, the UT-Knox Fencing Club must comply with the "UT COVID-19 Guidelines", which is applicable to the activities of all 30,000 students on campus. Ms. Creveling has been meeting and will continue to meet with oversight officials at UT in an effort obtain approval of a "Return to Practice Plan", which will allow the UT Fencing Club to return to face-to-face training by this fall semester (including at some point how to hold their usual large annual tournaments later in the year). The Division appreciates Ms. Creveling's efforts to keep the UT-Knox Fencing Club viable in such a massive and highly structured administrative environment.

**High School Fencing Team.** Coach Vines at Baylor School also finds himself in a unique situation. Concerning his fencing team's on-campus practice and training, he has had discussions with Baylor officials and understands that he will be able to begin working with his team again on August 19<sup>th</sup>. However, Coach Vines explained that because of the school's location in Chatanooga, which is geographically close to the substantial high school fencing activity and frequent tournaments held in the Atlanta, Georgia area, a few years ago the Baylor School joined a Georgia-based high school fencing league. Thus, his fencing program's primary focus on team league competition will likely be subject to whatever COVID-19 guidelines or mandates that may be imposed generally on Georgia high school sports programs, plus any specialized requirements that the Georgia-based league itself may impose on Baylor (especially regarding team travel to the tournament venues in Georgia). Coach Vines is in communication with Georgia athletic authorities and the league in which Baylor competes to determine how he may prepare his team, in the context of COVID-19 protocols, for future league competitions during the 2020-21 Season.

**Community Education Fencing Program.** Because of the unique administrative structure of the fencing program that Mr. Grimwood and his fencing club, Cumberland d'Esclime, oversee through Nashville

Communication Education (“NCE”), he must comply with any COVID-19 protocols that may be imposed by NCE before he can restart his program. (E.g., NCE is not part of the local Metro School District in Nashville, but it does follow the academic calendar and other procedures of the District.) At the moment, Mr. Grimwood expects to be able to restart his in-person fencing classes after NCE’s fall break, which, like the local school district, ends on October 12<sup>th</sup>. But in addition to these organizational administrative hurdles, the straightforward COVID-19 safety protocol of frequently cleaning all fencing uniforms and disinfecting all equipment is problematic for Mr. Grimwood’s program. His beginning group-class students (and a few of his advanced students) do not own their own uniforms or equipment. At the beginning of each semester, each student is fitted and assigned a uniform and equipment that is owned by Mr. Grimwood’s club, but the students do not take anything home with them. All uniforms and equipment remain stored on the premises of NCE and it is Mr. Grimwood’s responsibility to maintain COVID-19 cleaning and maintenance protocols, or pay to have it maintained, for all uniforms and equipment between each weekly class. Looking forward to restarting his classes in October, and perhaps even holding his own tournament later in the Season, Mr. Grimwood has been considering creative and cost-effective ways to regularly clean and disinfect his club’s gear on a weekly basis, once his fencing classes restart at NCE.

***Private Fencing Club.*** As described above, for his private club, Chairman Piraino restarted limited training as soon as it was allowed under USAF guidelines and local government requirements. Effective August 1<sup>st</sup>, like all private fencing clubs, Chairman Piraino’s club could now hold a sanctioned tournament, subject to USAF’s recently published *Return to Local events Guidelines* and current local Nashville restrictions and protocols. Overall, the key hurdle for beginning sanctioned tournaments lies with USAF. As of the date of this Meeting, USAF status for authorizing sanctioned tournaments is as follows:

**Local.** Effective August 1<sup>st</sup>: USAF Guidelines; comply with local requirements; Division participants **only**; subject to final sanctioning approval by each local Division, based on a case-by-case consideration of the local circumstances affecting each Division’s local tournaments.

**Regional.** No dates set yet. Chairman Piraino’s estimate is that it may be late fall or winter.

**National.** No revised dates set yet, Chairman Piraino’s belief is that it is not likely until 2021.

Chairman Piraino believes personally that it is too early for his private club to hold even a small local sanctioned tournament. He has polled his club members (including parents) to determine when and what safety protocols standards would make them comfortable for participating in club activities, including tournaments. He intends to consider his polling data and monitor changing circumstances before deciding whether and when to have his private club hold a small and carefully controlled USAF-sanctioned local tournament.

### **3. Overview of some of the key temporary reductions in fees for various USAF memberships, apparently related to the COVID-19 shutdown.**

The last COVID-19 topic that Chairman Piraino discussed briefly at the Meeting, was to make Members aware of some of the temporary fee reductions that USAF has announced recently.

**Existing Club Renewal Membership.** \$60 insurance credit based on insurance coverage paid for the 2019-20 Season that became unnecessary after the March shutdown. Plus, an extra \$50 renewal goodwill credit. Thus, the former \$625 renewal fee is now \$515.

**New Club Membership.** \$575

**High School Membership.** Divisions can now purchase a blanket high school membership for one fee, allowing an unlimited number of high schools in the Division to be covered under that single group fee.

**Individual Renewal Membership.** \$75 for one year, but the fee goes back to \$85 on 9/30/2020.

**Non-Competitive Membership.** Fencers with this type of membership may fence in one sanctioned tournament per year and be eligible to earn a rating, without having to upgrade their membership to Competitive.

**Individual Lifetime Membership:** Reduced from \$1,200 to \$1,000 until 9/30/2020. This reduction also

applies to the installment payment method.

Chairman Piraino urged Members to double check this information on USAF's website before making a final decision on membership fee prices.

#### **D. OLD BUSINESS**

**Division Support for Developing New High School Fencing Programs.** Chairman Piraino reminded Members that the Division is committed to encouraging and helping develop new high school fencing programs. He continues to believe that the Division's support of such programs is an important factor for developing the popularity and overall growth of competitive fencing in Tennessee.

Therefore, despite the hardships and continuing challenges imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic during the 2020-21 Season, to the extent the Division has discretionary funds available, it will continue trying to find ways to reasonably support and encourage the growth of high school fencing programs in Tennessee. If there is enough interest among Tennessee high schools, and if the Division has funds available, Chairman Piraino is considering purchasing a USAF group membership, which would allow an unlimited number of Tennessee high school fencing programs join USAF.

#### **E. TREASURER'S FINANCIAL REPORTS.**

**1. 2019-20 Financial Statement.** Because of the on-line virtual format for the Meeting, a draft copy of the Division's 2019-20 Financial Statement was not presented to Members. Instead, Chairman Piraino asked Treasurer Ron Wilson to give an overview explanation of the Division's year-end financial status and briefly summarize the key factors of the Division's revenues and expenses during the 2019-20 COVID-19 shortened Season.

Treasurer Wilson began with the positive news that despite the Division's almost 30% decrease in total revenues during the shortened Season, the Division ended the Season with a positive cash balance of just over \$6,000 on July 31, 2020. He pointed out that the Division posted its last revenue item on March 12, 2020. After that date, the Division continued incurring only modest expenses related to maintaining the Division's business infrastructure. There were no tournaments or other major events during March or the rest of the Season that generated large expenditures. Thus, the net effect was that most of the revenues earned prior to March, before the COVID-19 shutdown, were still available at the end of the Season and would be carried over to begin the 2020-21 Season. (*Please see Attachment Sec. E* for a copy of the final draft of the Division's 2019-20 Financial Statement that was summarized by Treasurer Wilson during the Annual Meeting.)

**2. Budget Guidelines for the 2020-21 Season.** Estimated Budget Guidelines were not presented at the Meeting for the coming Season. Because of the continuing COVID-19 shutdown, the overall prospects for restarting Division-sanctioned tournaments and other revenue-generating activities are too uncertain to reasonably predict when they might start or what the volume of such activity will be when they finally do start. We are optimistic, however, that competitive fencing activity in Tennessee and significant fencer participation in those activities will restart on a limited basis by January 2021, or a little later, and slowly increase thereafter. When the Division is able to return to its reasonably normal competitive fencing activities, we will closely monitor the expenses generated by that restart activity to ensure that incoming restart revenues will offset any surge in the Division's expenses.

#### **F. VOTING ACTIONS TAKEN AT THE MEETING.**

**1. NONE (other than election of 2020-21 Officers).** There were no new policies or policy changes proposed or funding requests made at the Meeting that required a vote of approval by the Division Members. As evidenced by the comment above noting the absence of any NEW BUSINESS items discussed in these Minutes, at the request of the Chairman, the Division's various Member-representatives of one private club and high school, community education, and university programs were focused almost exclusively on surviving the continuing COVID-19 shutdown and exchanging ideas on how to keep their fencing programs viable while working toward not only returning to training, but also to tournament competition.

**2. Election of 2020-21 Officers.** Chairman Piraino asked Secretary Wilson to list the names of the entire slate of nominees, who prior to the Meeting had expressed their desire to stand for election or re-election for each Division officer position for the 2020-21 Season. Secretary Wilson stated the names of the nominees and their desired positions, as follows.

Chairman: Robert Piraino, re-election. (*Music City Fencing Club*)  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair: Daniel Morrell, first time election. (*University of Tennessee- Knoxville Fencing Club*)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair: Zeno Doeleman, re-election. (*Music City Fencing Club*)  
Secretary/Treasurer: Ron Wilson, re-election. (*Cumberland d'Esgrime and Music City Fencing Club*)

Chairman Piraino asked if there were any other nominations from the Members at the Meeting for any office, or if there was any further discussion about any nominee. There were none. Since each nominee was unopposed for the position sought, Under Article VII, Section 2 of the Division's Bylaws, Secretary Wilson motioned that he be allowed to cast a unanimous vote FOR each of the unopposed nominees. Member Donovan Grimwood seconded the motion and there was no objection from Members. Thus, the duly elected Division officers for the 2020-21 Season are as listed above.

Daniel Morrell, the Division's newly elected 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair, is the Head Coach of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville Fencing Club. He has been fencing for eleven years, serving as a coach for the last eight of those years, and he has extensive experience serving on various bout committees within the Division and elsewhere.

The other Division Officers are very pleased that Mr. Morrell has agreed to bring his fencing experience and love of the sport and join them on the Division's Executive Committee. His fencing knowledge and expertise will be invaluable to the Division in helping to encourage, promote, and administer competitive fencing across the State of Tennessee. (*Please see Attachment Sec. F for a further description of Mr. Morrell's qualifications to serve as an officer of the Division.*)

In accordance with ARTICLE IV of the Bylaws, these officers will serve through the Division's next annual Meeting in 2021; or until their resignation; or until otherwise removed from their position in accordance with ARTICLE IV, SECTIONS 6 or 7 of the Bylaws.

## **G. FINAL CALL FOR DISCUSSION.**

After the election of Officers, Chairman Piraino asked whether any Members had any further old or new business to discuss; or whether anyone had anything additional to say or share with Members. No new or old business was mentioned, but Coach Vines at Baylor School asked Chairman Piraino whether the Division would consider posting more frequent updates about the Division's activities on its Facebook page. Coach Vines explained that he and his high school age fencers prefer to rely on social media for following the Division's current events and announcements, rather than periodically searching the Division's website. Coach Vines noted that he not only is interested in news about Division members, clubs, schools, and activities, but he also would like to become more informed about what is going on within the local Division administration itself, such as updates regarding decisions and policies from Division managers that directly affect, or are otherwise of interest to, Tennessee Division Members and their fencing programs.

Chairman Piraino acknowledged that he is well aware of the communication effectiveness of Facebook and other social media. Being personally responsible for the Division's social media presence, Chairman Piraino made a commitment to Coach Vines and to all other Division Members, that during the coming Season he would juggle his packed schedule to find more time to increase the Division's use of social media to communicate both general Division activities and specific Division administrative developments. To assist him with this commitment, Chairman Piraino requested Coach Vines and all other Members at the Meeting to please regularly provide him descriptions of any noteworthy events or accomplishments related to their fencing programs that would help him create more timely communications on the Division's social media outlets

**H. ADJOURNMENT.** To close the Meeting, Chairman Piraino asked Members to think about whether

there was anything the Division could do, or help them with, regarding their fencing programs, such as promoting their program; equipment needs; etc. If so, they should feel free to contact him. With no further requests from Members to speak to the Meeting, Chairman Piraino asked for a motion to adjourn. Secretary Wilson moved to adjourn the Meeting, which motion was seconded by Member Jim Brainerd. The motion was unanimously accepted by the Members with no objection. Chairman Piraino adjourned the Meeting at 7:28 p.m. CDT.

**I. ATTACHMENTS TO THESE MINUTES.** Copies of these Attachments are available upon request to the Division's Secretary. Please email requests to *tennesseefencing@gmail.com*. The Attachments are identified below by the letter of the Section of these Minutes in which they are referenced.

**Sec. A 2020 Annual Meeting Notices**

**A1.** Initial Joint Email Blast Notice (July 14<sup>th</sup>)

**A1(i)** - Zoom Registration Form

**A1(ii)** - Proxy Voting Form

**A2.** Facebook Post Reminder (July 26<sup>th</sup>)

**A3.** Webpage Post Reminder (July 26<sup>th</sup>)

**A4.** Final Email Reminder (July 28<sup>th</sup>)

**Sec. E Draft of Division Financial Statement** for the 2019-20 Season, summarized at the Meeting.

**Sec. F Biographical for Daniel Morrell** (newly elected Vice-Chairperson)

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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 and Treasurer  
Tennessee Division of USA Fencing  
August \_\_, 2020