

TFL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Sunday, January 21, 2018
8:00 PM
Online via GoToMeeting

Minutes

In attendance:

Keith Pittman (Chair) – Asheville HS
Shannon Jarman (Vice Chair) – Cumberland International
Jeff Welty (Secretary) – Durham Academy
Mary Morales – Charlotte Catholic
Jonathan Peele – Charlotte Latin
John Walker (non-member webmaster) – Albertus Magnus

I. Call to Order. Keith called the meeting to order at 8:04 p.m. and declared a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes. Shannon moved to accept the minutes of the previous meeting. Mary seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Evelyn Stackley was not able to attend. Keith stated that the only expense since the last meeting was about \$460 for the annual renewal of GoToMeeting. He did not know whether any funds have been received since the last meeting as a result of schools paying dues.

IV. Committee and Staff Reports

a. Merchandise (Morales) – Mary reported that Ann Petersen is looking into local vendors for merchandise. Ann was not able to attend so no additional details were available.

b. NCASA Liaison (Peele) – NCASA has announced its extemp topics for the middle school state tournament, which are on its website, and has chosen to use the NCAA athletes topic for public forum.

c. Webmaster (Walker) – John stated that he had to renew the site's SSL certificate at a cost of \$59 for one year. Jonathan moved to authorize reimbursement for the fee, Mary seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

V. State tournament harassment policy discussion. Shannon stated that at recent tournaments, two phenomena have been observed: (1) some teams will attend final rounds en masse and react approvingly and enthusiastically to competitors from their own team while reacting negatively to other competitors in an attempt to disrupt competitors or influence judges, and (2) some final round observers will hold up cell phones, visible to competitors, displaying obscene messages. There was discussion of whether the TFL should have a harassment policy that addresses these behaviors and others; whether we can address the problem without excluding student observers from rounds; and whether solutions like having non-judge "proctors" in rounds or having judges read a script to the audience regarding expected behavior would be helpful. Shannon volunteered to draft and circulate to the committee, within the next week, anti-harassment language for inclusion in the manual. She will also send Keith the final round script for judges that is used at Dogwood tournaments.

VI. State tournament judge and round assignments. Keith stated that several coaches have expressed to him concerns about unethical pairing of preliminary rounds and judge manipulation in elimination rounds. The concerns so far have arisen about debate, not speech. The coaches expressing concerns did not present any evidence of wrongdoing. The sense of the committee was that manipulation of preliminary pairings is impossible because the computer makes the pairings using a fixed algorithm, and that we have adequate checks in place to prevent the manipulation of judging panels, such as prohibiting coaches whose schools are involved in elimination debates from participating in judge assignment for those debates. The committee did not see a need for additional manual changes but it may be desirable to highlight to coaches the fact that the tournament is managed by a neutral out-of-state administrator and that coaches may be present in the tab room if desired.

VII. State tournament congress legislation. Keith raised several issues regarding Congress:

1. We usually try to have two clerks of Congress, one from the east, one from the west. Scott Bennett has been the west clerk for years and would like to continue. He has stated that Deb Henderson at Jack Britt would like to be the east representative. By consensus, the committee approved of that.
2. Historically, the final round of the tournament has been based on the NC General Assembly rather than the US Congress. This makes the round special and feels appropriate for the state tournament. However, using actual legislation pending before the General Assembly has been problematic at times because it is too partisan and/or does not attract equal pro and con support. Scott has volunteered to work with Deb to write bills that are NC-focused but not based on current, pending legislation. By consensus, the committee approved of that.
3. We need to provide legislation for the preliminary rounds. Scott is not willing to write all that legislation, nor to solicit, accept, and revise student submissions, which in the past have not been numerous enough and have not been in proper form. Jonathan suggested asking Scott to select bills from prior months' NSDA Congress packets. Keith thought that Scott would likely be willing to do that. By consensus, the committee approved of that.

VIII. State tournament staffing update. Keith and Jonathan talked to Lauren McCool with the NSDA national office. She has agreed to manage the tournament for \$350 plus expenses and is excited to do so. Chris Palmer is apparently willing to customize Tabroom in various ways, e.g., to allow first-year-out judges to be "free strikes." It also sounds like we will be able to do electronic ballots in both debate and speech. Keith stated that he would assign committee members to tab staff positions, but would like to know whether anyone has preferences – committee members should email him if so. Jonathan expressed a willingness to do anything.

IX. State tournament logistics and planning. This items was folded into the above.

X. Policy/manual changes. The new manual was circulated to the committee before the meeting. The changes were highlighted in yellow. They were relatively minor. Keith asked committee members to review the manual by Friday and to propose any additional needed changes.

XI. State tournament protest policy. Shannon submitted in advance a written proposal for handling protests. A lengthy conversation ensued. There was support for many aspects of Shannon's proposal, with some limitations. Among the points made in the conversation were the following:

- Shannon stated that there have been too many protests that seem not to be meritorious but rather seem to be strategic attempts to disqualify students who are doing well at the state tournament. She wants to have clear procedures for resolving protests.
- Shannon stated that, for speech in particular, it would be a big help to collect pieces in advance. Otherwise, it takes some students a long time to produce pieces, if they can produce them at all, and this slows down the evaluation of protests. Chris noted by email that the NSDA does not collect pieces in advance, though students must produce them if there is a protest. By consensus, the committee agreed that the manual should state that students are expected to have their pieces with them – for interp, both the original work and the cutting – and that inability to produce a script may be considered when evaluating a protest.
- Shannon also stated that having disqualification be the only remedy for a successful protest is not good because some infractions are not severe enough to deserve that penalty. There was broad support for the idea of having a range of remedies or sanctions. Jonathan suggested that the protest form also ask what remedy the protesting coach is seeking – in many cases, the protesting coach may not really want a student to be disqualified for a minor infraction. By consensus, the committee agreed with that suggestion.
- Jonathan asked whether only the head coach should be able to file a protest. After some discussion, by consensus, the committee agreed that schools should be able to designate at registration up to three coaches who have the authority to file protests.
- Jonathan asked whether the 30-minute time limit for filing a protest, as referenced in Shannon's written proposal, is reasonable. For example, what if the coach is judging a round and doesn't hear of the issue for 45 minutes? Conversely, is 30 minutes too long in elimination rounds when semis may start 15 minutes after quarters ends? The sense of the group was that a less specific statement that a protest should be filed in a "timely manner" would be better.
- There was some discussion about the composition of the protest committee. The sense of the group was that normally, the three coaches on that committee (in addition to the Vice Chair and the tournament manager) should be members of the state committee. Yet that is not always possible and then other coaches should be able to be pulled in.

By consensus, the committee agreed that Keith and Shannon should attempt to revise the manual based on Shannon's written proposal and the committee's discussion of it.

XII. Virginia Sutherland Circle of Honor. No nominations were offered.

XIII. Other business. None was identified.

XIV. Set next meeting time/date. Keith will do a Doodle poll for a specific date, but the committee agreed to meet in early February to focus on logistics for the state tournament. We will invite Lauren to participate in that meeting.

XV. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:50.