

MLFA Spring Coaches Meeting
April 27, 2013
Our Redeemer Lutheran School

Beginning at 8:20 AM, the four standing committees and two ad hoc committees met to discuss the issues pertinent to their areas of focus.

Patrick Russell called the meeting of the entire membership to order at 9:35 AM and asked for the committee reports to begin.

Committee Reports

Category Committee: Helen Andrews reported on the following categories:

- **Farrago** has been proposed again to alleviate (possibly) the overabundance of **Prose** entries at all meets. Farrago might be viewed as “advanced prose.” HS definition: The challenge of farrago is to select material from a variety of literary genres (poetry, short stories, speeches, essays, drama, novels) which addresses a central specific theme or emotion, and to interpret the material through oral presentation.
- **News Reporting, Persuasive and Informative Speaking** --- These categories are “in trouble” -- - the numbers of entries in these categories are extremely low, so low they often do not support a power round at meets.
- **Special Events** – This category is doing very well. The committee will review the five choices to see if anything needs to change.
- **Impromptu Speaking** – Meet Hosts will be asked to provide BLANK note cards for students entered in this category to prevent “pre-written” speeches.
- **Group Improv** – Timekeepers will be asked to hold up a card at 3 minutes, in addition to 4 and 5 minutes to offer the student a chance for a more coherent close. The time limit for the category remains the same: 4-5 minutes.
- **Moments in History** – The period in history for the 2014 season will be **1930-1950**.
- Helen explained that the **Farrago** proposal, the “**in trouble**” categories, and **special events** review will be addressed at the summer meeting of the Category Committee. Helen then asked permission for Bruce Coats to have the floor.
- **Rubrics** – Does the rubric help or hurt us? There was some discussion about the low scores given this year especially in one case brought up by two of the members where the high score in the room was 24. Bruce then asked the membership to respond to two questions with a show of hands: 1. Do you like the rubric the way it is? 2. Do you think the rubric should be changed? The response appeared to be 50/50. Half of the membership likes the rubric as is; half thinks the rubric should be changed.

Judge Standards and Training Committee: Patrick Russell reported for this committee in **Joe Danek’s** absence.

- Seven (7) judge concern forms were submitted this season, compared to 5 last year, and 13 before any standardized judge training was in place. One concern was for math not being done correctly, two concerns were for quality of comments and four concerns were for low scores. There has been anecdotal conversation this season about low scores. Of the 5 judge concern forms submitted last season, only one was for low scores. Considering that over 5000 judge rounds are held and only 7 judge concern forms were submitted this season, the percentage of problems works out to .0014 percent so the training appears to be helping.
- When a concern is received, the database is checked to make sure that the judge has been trained. The MLFA membership approved “sanctioning” a team for providing an untrained judge. To date, the judge concerns that have been received have been for “trained” judges.

- Revisions to the judge training will be made this summer especially with the new videos that Helen Andrews completed for the various categories. Hopefully the impromptu category video will be improved. Scoring will be more standardized rather than the ranges that are currently used. More emphasis will be placed on the quality of comments to be given as well as accommodations for certain students.
- Discussion followed regarding how to verify that judges have been trained. **Names of judges must be re-entered into the MLFA database yearly to verify that they have been trained and/or updated.**

A suggestion was offered for a checkbox on each tournament registration form for the head coach to check as verification that all the judges being brought to the meet are trained in the MLFA standardized judging process and entered in the database. Another idea was about providing more “stand-by” judges at meets so that head coaches do not feel compelled to replace a last minute “sick” judge with any “untrained” adult versus paying a substantial monetary fine. Patrick mentioned that it’s the organization’s hope to include a section in the “new coaches” training that might help new coaches work with judges. Promote “shadowing” for first-time judges, for example.

- A discussion about new judges then followed. How does a coach match up a new judge with an experienced judge? What are “best practices” for new judges? Should head coaches meet with new judges before they go to the check-in tables with their critique sheets as one head coach does? Is it the meet host’s responsibility to match up a new judge who wants to shadow an experienced judge? How does that happen?

State Tournament Committee: Barbara Hallman

- Barbara reported that 1,347 students in 886 entries participated in the state tournament. Ninety-seven of the 100 rooms at the Holiday Inn were used and the Holiday Inn gave the MLFA a monetary donation for business generated. Photo booths were added for the first time this year as a fundraiser and the organization raised \$725. Barbara shared Lost & Found items for the members to pick up as well as 3 team envelopes that were left behind. She also reported that Online Registration and Google Docs worked really well.
- The tentative location for next year’s state tournament is South Milwaukee on the target date of March 22, 2014. Neenah HS is available in case South Milwaukee cannot accommodate. Brian Galineau is point person for South Milwaukee. On paper all looks good, but Sarah Lichey still needs to do walk-through. An email will be sent to membership as soon as there is confirmation.

Tournament Practices and Policies: Brian Galineau

- **Brian** requests that teams attend only 5 (five) meets. Tournaments hosts schedule their meets with passwords. Head coaches sign up for meets after they email the hosts to indicate their interest in attending and wait for invitation to sign up. A lively discussion was terminated when Patrick Russell reminded the membership that this would be discussed at greater length under **2013 Tournament/Festival Registration Procedures** per today’s agenda.
- Brian raised the question to the membership if it is the infraction table’s role to tell a judge if s/he has scored too low? Some discussion followed and Patrick Russell asked if we have or need a list of “best practices” for the infraction table. A comment was also made about the check-in table personnel not catching math errors, etc. Is this a tournament procedure that needs to be addressed?

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Technology: Jim Vaughn

Jim reported the committee continues to pursue improving site design and layout of the website as well as vendor options.

He mentioned reviewing an App for scoring rubrics and a social media site for forensics.

He is working with Andy Lichey on improving the Registration process especially where the rooms got messed up with the regroup function.

New Coaches Training: Robin Stein

Robin is one of several members interested in working on this committee. Today the group focused on listing the needs of new coaches and how to recruit new coaches:

- To understand more about the categories
- Timeline of the forensic schedule (not just the competition calendar but the team's schedule at school)
- What to do at the first meeting [organizational practices, how to get kids involved, number of kids in categories, etc.]
- Meet etiquette for students, judges, coaches
- How to recruit judges
- Meet with new coach just before state to help with registration, etc.
- Training video for new coaches
- Sister school for new school with new coach
- Meetings and workshops for new coaches --- more than currently exists at fall meeting
- Mentor checkbox for fall meeting as to who is willing to be a mentor for a new coach --- email reply in August so pairs can be matched at fall meeting
- Best practices for new coaches
- Flyer about 4N6 to schools that do not have a 4N6 team
- Infomercial about 4N6 on the website

T-Shirt Committee: Diane Stirn

Diane reported that t-shirts sales made some money this year and we could check the budget for the dollar amount.

She stressed the importance of submitting t-shirt designs as she is NOT a graphic artist, etc. Next year's shirt design is based on a student submission related to **Angry Birds: Launch into Forensics!** The shirt would be black with white and red accents.

An idea from the "new coaches" committee was then put forward: Have students submit designs at each meet to be collected and voted on at State. Perhaps they could even work on them at the meets during "down" time. Students then vote on the winning design at state tournament so they are more invested in the entire fund raiser right from the beginning. More students know about it (since some schools/kids are clueless still). And the school that submitted the winning design would have their next season MLFA membership dues paid for.

Patrick Russell thanked all of the committee chairs for their reports. He then moved on to reports from the Treasurer and President.

Treasurer' Report: Maggie Menard-Mueller

Maggie distributed the MLFA Profit & Loss Statement for June 30, 2012 thru April 26, 2013 and the Balance Sheet as of April 26, 2013 with the 2012 comparison. She commented that while this is a working document and incomplete, it is very positive.

President's Report: Patrick Russell reported that it's been a GREAT YEAR!

- He then explained that he will become Past President at the end of this meeting.
- **Pam Cullen** will be leaving the role of Past President on the Executive Committee. Thank you to Pam.
- Thank you to **Jody Herbert** who has chosen not to extend her term as secretary.
- And introduced **Denise Kegley**, incoming President, to facilitate the Election of New Officers: President-Elect and Secretary

Election of New Officers: President-Elect and Secretary

The nominees for President-Elect included: **Bob Herman, Melissa Krahn** and **Dante Hill**. Denise asked each candidate to introduce themselves to the membership. After a ballot vote was taken and counted, **Melissa Krahn** won the position of **President-Elect**. **Carly Wacker** was the unopposed nominee elected to the position of **secretary**.

Congratulations to Melissa Krahn and Carly Wacker.

Policy Discussions and Decisions: Brian Galineau

Brian reminded us that we needed to address the two Constitution changes proposed and tabled from the State meeting:

Article III. Dues

Present: There shall be an annual fee. The Treasurer must receive application with payment or requisition by November 1 to be included in the membership mailings. After November 1, dues, plus an additional late fee, must be received by February 1 to be eligible to participate in the MLFA State Tournament.

Proposed: There shall be an annual fee. The Treasurer must receive application with payment or requisition by the deadline declared in the By-Laws to receive membership communications. After that deadline, members must pay dues to be included in member communications. All dues and fees must be paid by the late registration date established in the By-Laws to be eligible to participate in the MLFA State Tournament.

Discussion: The change gives flexibility to the organization to determine the date. It removes the date from the Constitution and maintains it in the By-Laws only.

Bruce Coats called the question to make the proposed change. **Jim Ross** seconded and the change to Article III. Dues passed unanimously. The date was removed.

Article V. Meetings – Section IV.

Present: The quorum of this organization for each meeting shall be the number present after three weeks' notice of said meeting has been distributed to all members.

Proposed: The quorum of this organization for regular meetings of the membership shall be the number present after three weeks' notice of said meeting has been distributed to all members. The number of members present after two weeks' notice has been given for a special meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Discussion: This proposal appears to be a solution without a problem. It died without a motion.

2013 Tournament/Festival Registration Procedures: Patrick Russell

Patrick began this agenda item by referring back to his President's Report. He said he did not give one because he thought it was a great year. At the same time, he wants to discuss the glitches involved in registering for tournaments. He stressed **discussing versus resolving** so that "best practices" versus policies/procedures for registration might evolve.

The draft 2014 tournament/festival competition calendar was being circulated through the room for membership to confirm/cancel/change etc. Patrick is responsible for fall distribution.

Everyone agreed that having the Competition Calendar/Schedule earlier in the school year is a big help.

Many questions/comments were raised in the discussion that followed:

- Why are some tournaments overbooked?
- Why are coaches plugging in “guesstimates” instead of exact numbers like 30 humorous solo entries?
- Why are some tournaments under booked? Is this due to a team booking two tournaments on the same night and then cancelling one?
- The problem is the coach’s “neurocity” to get in to “certain” meets.
- **What is the “drop dead” deadline when a coach must notify a host if his school needs to cancel? ONE or TWO weeks before a meet?**

Bruce Coats moved that we vote to change from one week to two weeks as the discussion revealed that most would be agreeable to the change. Several members seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

- When should registration open?
- Consider “windows of openings” --- like the first weekend of meets open on XXX ---the second weekend of meets open on XXX.
- Should tournament/festival host enter an “estimated” opening date of meet on calendar? What about password?
- Does a host invite teams who attended the previous year? Is this a “best practice”?
- Does a host invite new teams? Is this also a “best practice”? What if the host is out of spaces?
- Bob Herman suggested FEE for category changes/new entries after meet has been scheduled to avoid the over and under booking concerns that were mentioned.
- Tournament hosts cannot have lives revolve around the meet --- we just want to be able to unlock on opening day.
- Should there be a document for coaches on registration?
- Important: Consider that some schools need a certain amount of time to get their checks cut to pay for festival/tournament registration.
- Important: UPDATE your team’s registration with HOST school so numbers are accurate to avoid over and under booking.
- **BIG JOB: How to BALANCE needs of HOSTS (flexibility) and needs of COACHES (communicate with parents, school districts for checks, buses, etc.)**

Executive Committee will focus on these issues/consider these questions, perhaps at a summer meeting. Proposal could be sent out to membership and/or ready to go at fall meeting.

Dismissal

Jim Ross moved that the meeting be adjourned. **Bruce Coats** seconded and it passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 11:40 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlene Pechura for Jody Herbert, MLFA Secretary