

Minutes from the MFL Annual Meeting
October 15, 2006
Milton Academy, Milton, MA

The meeting was called to order at 1:34 pm by the president, Chris Palmer.

Board members present: Wendy O'Neil, Lisa Honeyman, Chris Palmer, Joyce Albert, Amanda Parker, Holly Loell, Debbie Simon, Rob Croteau and Paul Wexler.

1. Report on previous season (Chris)

- We have a number of new programs in the MFL this year, including Brewster Academy, Chelsea High School, Scituate High School.
- L. Honeyman created a new coach manual that has been distributed to all MFL programs.
- J. Albert is working on a tournament hosting manual.
- We have a new program, Revere, hosting a tournament in January.
- Tim Averill comments that the MFL Website gets easier and easier to use (yay, Chris!)
- There were approximately 10,000 entries at MFL tournaments last year.
- Sarah Donnelly thanked Chris Palmer for sending letters of thanks to the principals of schools that hosted tournaments. They have been very well received. Chris said he would continue doing that during the 2006-2007 season.

2. Treasurers Report – (Rob Croteau, Treasurer)

- We started the season with \$1600 in the bank and now have a balance of about \$3600. We are building funds so that we can host a big event every few years.
- Rob notes that we spent about \$185 copying ballots, judge manuals etc. for MFL run tournaments and suggested that the MFL invest in a copier or farm out copying projects to schools.
- Our 501(c)3 status is not official yet. We need to decide upon a few things that will affect the language used to write up our final paperwork. (1) Do we want to be able to give scholarships? (2) Do we want to be able to give seed money to schools starting up programs? (3) Do we want to be able to give grants to programs that are run by municipalities (public schools) and are not technically 501(c)3 entities? These must be formalized before we file. Are these things we want to do?

Chris - Motion for straw vote: – “To allow grants to programs.” There seems to be unanimous support. Because it is an exception to the 501(c)3 donation rule, we need to apply for special status. The board will pursue this.

3. Feedback on Today's events

Things went well. Thanks to everyone involved. In general, everyone was happy about the first ever all-novice event/coach's event. There was a suggestion that we do not run it on a Sunday if we do this again. S. Donnelly (Natick) says that she wanted to be with her students instead of at sessions for coaches/judges, but she also wanted to be at the sessions. Maybe it would be best not to run the novice tournament at the same time as the coach's convention. Marc Richitelli (Shrewsbury) asks if it is critical that we run the convention on the same day as a tournament? He suggested we run the annual meeting on the same day as the novice tournament, but the coach's convention on an alternate date. There was much support for offering coach's conventions in the future. How do we find a date? Maybe shift convention to start after Round 2 start so coaches can get their newer students started before going to meetings. Tim Averill (Waring) "I wouldn't come for a coach's meeting alone. Put it together with something else and it becomes worthwhile." Because there are tournaments on the next 2 weekends, we have 3 events in a row this year in October. Many felt this was too much. Maybe we can tweak the calendar next year to avoid this and also to put the novice event on a Saturday. Other suggestion: Run tournament in morning for novices and send them home. Then continue coach's meeting in the afternoon.

4. The State of Debate in the MFL

There is a lot of interest in debate, so why is it so hard to find debate programs? Tim Averill gave out a handout for the "Averill Debate Education Fund." This fund is specifically for helping developing debate programs. The logistics of debate make it difficult for new teams to get established. We plan to try to offer PFD at more tournaments. This is a good way to unite speech and debate. Chris made a plea to tournament hosts to offer PFD at speech tournaments. It is frustrating for coaches who want to offer both speech and debate programs since speech and debate events are often not offered at the same tournaments. They either need to split their team or only participate in one type of event or the other.

There will be free scrimmages in debate this season. The 1st one is at Waring on 10/30 from 4:00-7:00 pm. No trophies. Judged by students. Tim says there will be more free, low impact, low pressure events. Dates will be posted on-line.

Marc (Shrewsbury) suggests we allow host schools to offer PFD in lieu of Group if they are stretched for space. Sarah reminded us that we would need to review the bid process for States if we did something like this.

PFD is what people think of when they think of debate. It's attractive to new programs. Marc – "Please offer PFD more often. It doesn't require specialized judges." There is a lot of material written for judging PFD.

Straw poll indicates that many hosts will try to offer PFD this season. They can limit entry if necessary. The computer registration program can manage wait-lists.

Sarah (Natick) announced that PFD is now an NCFL national event. Suggests we look at their ballot. It is more tailored to lay judges. (We have been using the NFL ballot.)

Jim Murphy (Weston) cautioned that we be careful not to shove LD and Policy debate into the background. It's hard to find dates within state to compete in those events. This means new teams can't participate. It's just too expensive to travel. Debate is suffering as a result. We need some solutions. The quality of competition in debate at states is low.

5. Election Date and at-large positions

Should we change the date for board elections to STATES and elect at-large members? This would require written statements from candidates and a secret ballot.

Rationale: The new board would be able to set the agenda for its season rather than being handed the league three weeks before having to host a tournament. Also, since most schools attend States, more schools would participate in the election.

Sarah D. (Natick) not excited about idea of having to run for at-large positions. League needs to identify members and bring them into the leadership. Some need to be appointed.

Marc R. (Shrewsbury) – historically there were only 3 at-large members who were “oldies” who didn't want an ‘office.’ It was expanded to welcome new folks in. It was also expanded to balance out the board – so that there would be representatives from large and small programs, speech and debate schools etc.

Greg Cunningham (Hull) – Should at-large members be assigned specific jobs?

Would people come to the coaches meeting if there were no elections?

Debbie Simon (Milton) – Meeting in spring allows for planning and changes that can be made before the season starts.

Do we need a meeting in the fall, too, to meet new coaches and kick-off the season?

Lisa Honeyman (Newton) – It would be nice to have a forum before elections so we can see/hear candidates. This is especially important for newer programs that many not know those running for office well (or at all).

Needham is willing to allow time for candidates to talk with folks (March tournament) prior to States in April. It runs both speech and debate events so most schools will be present.

LH, DS and WO all prefer a formal gathering rather than an informal drop-in type arrangement to hear the candidates. We discussed ideas like video statements posted on the web, but came to no resolution.

Straw Poll: Most coaches like the idea of moving election to States. No one is violently against it.

Chris will post a full proposal in time for a 1-month comment period before the board votes.

We continued to discuss at-large positions. After MUCH consideration of various alternatives, we decided to keep things the way they are. We can make one major change now and then revisit the at-large situation at a later date if necessary.

6. States Date

Greg Cunningham (Hull) asks that we move States from its current date, April 14, 2007, to an alternative because this is the first weekend of April vacation. The only other viable date is April 28. The tournament is currently being hosted at Silver Lake Regional High School. Is it available on April 28? (Maybe – Must check.)

Marc R. (Shrewsbury) advocates the change. He says that coaches and students need vacation. It affects the family life of the coaches.

Reasons not to change – April 28 is a full month after the previous tournament. Students will be out of practice and will have moved on to other things. Also, the date has been on many school calendars for a few months now and teams have made plans with that in mind.

Motion – Wendy O’Neil (Needham) to change date of states to April 28 if host site is available. 2nd by Debbie Simon (Milton Academy.) Passed without objection.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Honeyman

VP/Secretary