

MSDL Board Meeting Agenda

April 26, 2021 @ 7:30 pm

Via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 PM by the president, Greg Cunningham

Board Members in attendance

Joyce Albert, Scott Caron, Josh Cohen, Greg Cunningham, Sue Hennessey, Lisa Honeyman, Jim Honeyman, Sheryl Kaczmarek, Tammie Ruda, Chris Sheldon and PJ Wexler.

1. Annual meeting/Trophy pick-up.

1:00-1:45 PM Meeting via Zoom

- Treasurer's report
- Report: Summary of what we have learned
- Opportunity for membership to offer feedback

2:00-4:00 PM Award Pick-Up in parking lot:

ABI-LAB
27 Strathmore Road
Natick, MA 01760

- Coaches can stop by and pick up their States trophies & previous tournament awards

Greg will send out a reminder to everyone in the league on Tuesday

2. Debate Tournament - Saturday, May 22, 2021 (Josh)

I would like permission from the Board to hold a league-sanctioned debate tournament on Saturday, May 22:

- Novices only - open to all MSDL members and other schools we have invited to our debate tournaments this year
- Topic - April NSDA topic (International Monetary Fund)
- Probably 4 rounds
- No medals - just the recognition of one's peers.
- Staffing - Josh Cohen

Motivation - Some varsity debaters would like novices to have an opportunity to debate the April topic because these varsity enjoyed researching and arguing it for TOCs. (Josh)

The board is in full support of "The Cohen Invitational" tournament on May 22, 2021. Josh will order the NSDA Campus rooms. There will be no charge for novices who participate.

3. Big Question tournament Thursday/Friday April 27-28, 2021 (PJ/Josh)

We currently have 16 people registered.

This tournament will be held on Zoom. We need 8 rooms.

Thursday, April 27: Two preliminary Rounds

Friday, April 28: One prelim round, semi-finals and then finals

It will be very difficult to avoid having people judge students from their own school.

It appears that some schools still owe judges. PJ and Josh will follow up on that.

4. What, if anything, have we learned in the last year that might help us add new active programs/schools to the league , especially in Speech? (Jim)

Another way of asking the same thing: What opportunities exist for expanding the MSDL that didn't exist before the pandemic?

- Speech seems to have suffered this year. Numbers at tournaments were down at least 25%, even though most schools continued to participate. The single biggest issue that schools are facing is the lack of a coach. Even some schools with an advisor, don't really have the leadership they need.
- It was easier for schools to find judges, especially because alumni from around the country could judge a round or two.
- It was easier for students to participate in tournaments farther from home because of the lack of travel costs.
- Participating from inside a school building seemed to work better than having students participate from their own homes (where that was possible.) Speech competitors have found the experience of competing from home to be very isolating. There is just no social aspect to the activity.
- Getting new programs involved has been a long-standing problem. If we're really serious about growing new programs in Massachusetts, we need to dedicate several board members whose sole job is to recruit and support new programs. When we put out information about at-large members, we may want to specifically state that we are looking for a few people who want to focus on recruitment.
- We agree that we need to wait until we're headed back to some degree of normalcy before we focus our energy on recruitment.

- Speech events, by their nature, require a live audience.
- Without the social aspect, it is hard to keep kids who are not winning trophies engaged.
- Zoom practices are pretty effective. Students can practice in the evenings more easily.

5. Schedule for next year/who runs the tournaments? (Kaz)

- So much is still up in the air. Different parts of the country will handle in-person tournaments differently.
- It makes sense for us to plan September & October online. Schools will be scrambling to get students in school for classes before they start focusing on the extra curriculars.
- Most of the major tournaments in our region (that require air travel) will be fully virtual in the fall. Locals may be in person in some modified way.

Sept 17-19: Yale

Sept 25: PF & LD in conjunction with NYCFL

Oct 15-17: Likely to be Bronx (PSAT on Oct 16)

Oct 23: Novice Tournament

Oct 29-30: Averil debate tournament

October 30: MSDL Online Speech & Congress

We will wait until September to make any further plans.

Schools that have traditionally held tournaments in the past should start exploring with their administrations what the possibilities are for hosting a tournament in person next year.

6. Finances (Jim)

During the 2020-2021 season, our income has exceeded our expenses.

Many agreed that it is not a bad idea to have a healthy balance in our account in case of emergency. We are also interested in exploring ways to use our funds to help the league.

Now that Zoom meetings have become more commonplace, we could maybe have some invited speakers in? Do some coach training. Coach seminars. Do another on-line judge training? Maybe do some seminars for kids? Even on a weekday evening? Something along the lines of what is offered at some of the summer camps kids pay to attend. Maybe a "seminar series" with one offering each month - something like the 2nd Monday or 3rd Thursday - where we have a seminar. Maybe ask the NYCFL folks if they're interested in partnering with us?

We will create a small committee to hire speakers and organize the seminar series in both speech & debate events. Sue Hennessey said she'd be happy to work on this committee, as would Jim Honeyman.

New Business

- Greg will put out a call for self-nominations for at-Large board positions with a deadline of May 7.

- Thank you to PJ Wexler for his years of service as MSDL Chair of Congress.

Motion to adjourn: Sheldon

2nd: Kaz

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 PM

Respectfully submitted,

--Lisa Honeyman

clerk/secretary