

MSDL Board Meeting
Monday, April 9, 2018 7-9 PM
Room 235, Natick High School

Present: Joyce Albert (Natick), Josh Cohen (Newton South), Greg Cunningham (Needham), Jim Honeyman (Newton South), Lisa Honeyman (Newton South), Adam Nir (Needham), Amanda Parker (Natick), Sue Hennessey (Acton-Boxborough), Chris Sheldon (Bancroft School) and Paul Wexler (Needham). Marc Rischitelli joined us at 8:00 pm by phone.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by the president, Amanda Parker.

1. MSDL Tax Filing Status (Jim)

Jim has filed our tax forms. He also shared information about our current financial situation – which is good.

2. Dissolving the MFL (Amanda)

The new contact at the lawyer's office says we still have some paperwork to file.

3. Dinner for Debbie's retirement (Lisa/Jim)

Jim will call some locations. We need a date in May or very early June. He'll call around this week. He'll try to report back by the end of this week.

4. Gender bias commentary included in judge's trainings (PJ/Josh)

Students have raised concerns about the issue of gender bias in debate (and speech). They asked to have a discussion about this issue at State Debate – and had that discussion. There was a similar discussion held at State Speech, too. Josh suggests that we need to enter fact-gathering mode to collect hard data about the problem. If we solicit data to begin research, we could set up an agenda that might be transferrable beyond the MSDL. This issue is not just limited to our local league.

Josh boiled the comments from the Debate State discussion to four major issues that were raised.

1. Quantifying potential judge bias
2. Characterizing gender disparity and blatant gender bias on ballots
3. Do girls find debate a place they want to be?
4. Judge attitudes. (Demographic factors)

He says we have copies of scanned ballots going back several years and we can go through them and look at comments and see what trends we find.

On a short-term basis – how do we address what we can while we're still gathering data?

Joyce suggests that we may be able to address some of the short-term concerns by forming a sub-committee to meet over the summer.

For speech – we need to gather data since we only have ballots from one tournament (Mardi Gras). Maybe ask coaches to be on the look-out for ballots that are of concern and get copies to us so we have concrete examples of what's going on.

How do we involve students in the discussion? We need to know what their experiences have been and also what they think could be done about it.

Students are not just focused on bias as regards to the gender issue. They point out that there are biases related to race, gender identity etc. that also need to be addressed.

We will form a sub-committee to examine short-term changes that we can adopt to limit the biases students face in rounds:

Chair: Josh Cohen

Committee: Chris Sheldon, Amanda Parker, Joyce Albert, PJ Wexler.

5. [Gender meetings & next steps](#) (Amanda)

Amanda wants time to read through the notes from the State Speech meeting and then will get back to students.

Maybe we can find a way to continue this conversation with students in the fall. A symposium? Amanda will look into what we might be able to put together as an offering for the league.

6. [MSDL Coaches Directory](#) (Sue)

- a. How and when to get the link out to the league?

There are concerns about posting personal information online.

- b. Would this be a "live" document where users could edit their own info in real time or a static, view only document?

Concerns about personal information being insecure. Editable for board, but no one else?

- c. Would we want this to be available to the public via our website or only to coaches? (this would determine the answer to the question above).

We will not do this. It sets people up for spam. Some people will choose not to be listed if this is going to be public. We do not necessarily want our personal phone numbers listed live on line.

- d. If we decide on a static document, someone would have to maintain it on a monthly/quarterly basis (probably more changes and updates in the fall as league registrations come in), Sue volunteered for this position if needed.

7. [Annual meeting agenda](#) (Amanda)

It is long. We talked about ways to keep the meeting moving forward by limiting discussion per item on the agenda to a reasonable length. We need to get the agenda out sooner, rather than later, because there are many proposals on the agenda that are pretty substantial.

We talked about how the league is structured. The league meeting will be an information gathering session. Board members wear two hats: board members are all coaches and are also board members. The annual meeting is a time for discussion and sharing of information among *coaches*.

We have a board meeting scheduled on Monday, May 7, two days after the league meeting and at that time, the board will meet to vote on the various proposals.

8. [Logo Contest](#) (Amanda)

Siraj is eager to work with us. He provided a packet of choices for us to review (colors, fonts etc.) We made some suggestions and Amanda will communicate with Siraj so that he can work to refine the logo.

9. AMSA judges at States (Chris, Joyce, Amanda)

At states, some judges had never judged before (by their own admission). Two of the judges were current students. (Both competed at the Holly.) There were numerous additional problems with this school regarding this tournament, as well as previous tournaments.

There was a similar issue with this school at NCFL Qualls last year. We need to address our concerns with the administration at AMSA. Amanda will be away this week for work, but will deal with this later in the week.

On a related note:

We need to ask every school that attends any tournament to provide the form signed by the head of school (principal, head master, etc.) prior to participating at any tournament. On the form, we need the head of school to designate who the adult advisor to the team is. Only the adult can communicate with the league and do registration. Jim will draft these requirements and include them on the May agenda.

As a board, we will also draft a set of policies for suspension of a team from the league. We need to include wording that allows the board to suspend a team from the league for cause after due process. Greg will check the NCFL rules to see what wording they have.

10. Debate documentary “Hold harmless” agreement (Amanda)

The lawyers are working on that. We will meet over the summer to go over that.

11. Web & document updates (Lisa & Amanda)

We are working on those over the summer.

12. Extemp - using online sources (Amanda)

During prep, Amanda spends a lot of time telling students that they cannot be online. Why not? Answer – because of the help students get when they contact another human being who tells them how to answer and what points to include.

There is a corresponding issue in debate. Policy Debate already allows folks to be online. They email each other cases.

We should be aware that on-line access is becoming more common at tournaments.

13. Time Issues: violations & time signals (Amanda)

Kids are planning to use their grace period and are, therefore, going over. This is especially true in extemp, where students are abusing the purpose of the grace period. It is intended to be a safety cushion for students who accidentally go over time, not an excuse to go over the set time limit.

We discussed time violations and the length of the grace period. Maybe it should be shorter. Maybe we should eliminate the grace period entirely. We also discussed the circumstances under which we do and do not count time violations against a student etc.

Then, we talked about time signals. Should judges be expected to give time signals at all in prepared events? (Shouldn't competitors in prepared events know how long their presentation takes?) It asks a lot of judges. They have to watch the clock instead of the performance. Maybe we should decide, as a league, what standard time signals will be and give them to everyone? Maybe just 1 (at 9) and fist (at 10). That is it.

Do we need to stay consistent with national league time limits?

By the end of the discussion, we see two major issues in regards to TIME:

1. Judges are burdened with having to give time signals.
2. Kids see grace period as useable time – not as the safety net it is intended to be.

If the problem is burden on judges, then let's standardize with a 1 when there is 1 minute left and a fist at the end of the time limit in all prepared events. (Not Extemp, Radio or Impromptu).

A proposal of this nature will go on the annual meeting agenda.

14. Late summer / early fall meeting date (Amanda)

Amanda will send out a poll to figure out when we can meet over the summer.

Motion to adjourn – Sheldon

2nd – Nir.

Motion passes unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

--Lisa Honeyman

VP/Secretary