

MSDL Annual Meeting
May 1, 2021 at 1:00 PM
Via Zoom

1. Treasurer's Report

We are about \$2000 ahead of our balance as of May 1, 2020. We have received professional advice saying that we should have in the bank a balance equal to about 2 years worth of expenses. That's where we are. So, we are in good financial shape!

Motion to accept treasurer's report: S. Kaczmarek

2nd: J. Albert

Accepted unanimously

2. What we all learned about online tournaments this year? Feedback from coaches:

- M. Plunkett (Xavarian Brothers): It was a great year. Shout out to Jim Honeyman for his excellent ballots. There have been some ballots that were either blank or minimal, however. The absence of in-person oversight of judges was felt in the lesser quality of some ballots that students received.
- S. Donnelly (Natick): Thanked the officers and folks who helped administer the tournaments throughout the year. It was appreciated that things went so well. She also mentioned that the on-line experience made people feel disconnected. It was sometimes hard to know where to be and what was expected because of the nature of virtual tournaments.
- G. Cunningham (Needham): It was great that we were able to hold awards ceremonies that honored students in spite of the virtual format.
- S. Donnelly: The Speech States awards ceremony was lovely and it was so important to take a moment and thank the people who make this activity possible.
- J. Cohen (Newton South): Some of the things we did this year were great and we might want to change some of the things we do even in non-pandemic times. What innovations that we developed are worth saving?
- S. Kaczmarek (Lexington): Maybe we could keep a virtual judge room in non-pandemic times. It would make it a lot easier for judges to connect and ask questions. Logistically, this was easier in a virtual world.

- C. Sheldon (Bancroft): The beginning of the day for judges suffered enormously. Those folks who knew when to sign on etc. got some information about a specific tournament, but not everyone “showed up”. We hope that the videos that were created were helpful. But, as Mike said about ballots, we know not all judges got the training they needed.
- A. Parker (Natick): As someone who judged a lot -- it would have been helpful if there were a posted preliminary schedule with a note saying that if you’re not assigned to a round, you’re on call. Being able to plan ahead as to when to eat lunch, for example, would have been helpful.

Also: It would be helpful for coaches who post results on their own websites to get a copy of the school pdf report that we used to get. (Note: The “dashboard” view is better than the “show results” view currently.)

- T. Ruda (Walpole):

Tammie surveyed her students about their experiences this year:

On the debate side, students had a really good year and transitioned well to the virtual format. In fact, the format meant they had a bigger team and got more students involved this year.

Speech students had a very different feeling about this year. The absence of the social part of the activity really affected their enjoyment. The squad room was really nice to have. But, not being able to socialize with students from other schools was missed. They also wanted more interesting and fun “hardware.” The medals were not as loved as previous year awards.

The judging seemed more variable in speech than when tournaments were held in person.

- J. Honeyman (Newton South)

There was an enthusiasm drop-off, even among more experienced students, and some events felt this more than others (like DUO). Events like INFO were so small that they never held a final round. Those students felt they missed it out.

- T. Ruda: How did it go for students who were allowed to compete from inside their buildings later in the season?

General discussion about positives. Many schools are still not able to do this, though.

J. Cohen: Judge training videos were great - and now they exist for use in future years. Holding office hours for new judges in the run-up to tournaments was helpful, too. However, most new judges didn't take advantage of these resources. How do we encourage more participation?

G. Cunningham: The gift cards went well at awards ceremonies. It kept people in the audience through the end of the awards ceremony.

J. Bowden (Boston Latin): Congress this year fell between speech and congress. There were a few procedural adjustments (hand signals vs. Gavels) and it was hard to get students to be the P.O. Smaller chambers worked well. Easier to manage and everyone got to participate.

P. Wexler (Needham): Numbers at states were pretty much the same as last year, although there was only one senior.

L. Honeyman (Newton South): Echoing what PJ just said - our seniors who did congress lost interest as the year went on.

G. Cunningham: In the fall, the first few tournaments will be online, but we're hoping to get back to an in-person format soon.

Announcement: Roger Nix was not able to be here today, but they will be offering a summer coaching program for people who are interested. Contact Roger at Boston Debate League if you'd like more information. (This training is in Policy Debate).

3. Gauge interest for online monthly master classes for coaches and students next year.

Greg explained that we could do this online in webinar format on a regular basis. Have experts from across the country offer sessions in their area of expertise. Debbie Simon has agreed to do an interp session and also to help us coordinate and find people who could help us out in other events. We would ask one or two at-large board members to take on this project.

Would people be interested in attending? Yes.

Would students be interested in attending? Yes.

Maybe we could invite judges to attend, to. And maybe provide them with additional discussion and training in a breakout room afterwards.

Suggestion: Could we record and post these sessions in order to give even more people an opportunity to view these sessions?

Because of the positive feedback, we'll pursue this plan. Maybe starting in October.

4. New Business

If you are interested in serving as an at-large member of the board, contact Greg Cunningham by Friday, May 7.

Aria Shi (student from Lincoln-Sudbury): High school students from L-S are trying to create a middle school debate league. Wants to get word out to high school teams in case they want to help middle schoolers. They are hosting a tournament on May 8 and want to get the word out. Contact jishnujag@gmail.com if you want more information.

G. Cunningham noted that a Massachusetts Middle School league exists and that this group might want to coordinate with the adults who run that league.

Announcement:

Yale: September 17-19, 2021 virtual. These dates are confirmed. Schedule is not completely fleshed out yet.

Janet Novack posted a link for folks who want to vote on the PFD topic for NSDAs. (You can access the voting by logging in to your NSDA account.)

Motion to Adjourn: Sheldon

2nd: Albert

We adjourned to do States Trophy distribution at 1:53 PM

Respectfully submitted,

--Lisa Honeyman

VP/Clerk