



# UNITED STATES HANDBALL ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE USHA WINTER BOARD MEETING – January 25-26, 2025  
Tucson, AZ

## **Saturday, January 25, 2025**

President Denis Hogan opened the meeting at 8:03 a.m. MST at the Embassy Suites Hotel.

Board members present in person were President Hogan, Vice President Vale, Secretary Sove, Treasurer Birrell, Ben Van Arsdale, Rich Curtner, Rob Nichols, LeaAnn Martin, Frank Holquin, Max Langmack, Daniel Navarro, Jim Wohl, Kimberley Duval, and Greg Burns. Present virtually was Alethia Mendez-Caba. Carl Porter was absent at this time and his proxy vote was given to Martin. Also present were Executive Director Matt Krueger with Development Director Sam Esser. A quorum was present.

The minutes from the Summer Board Meeting were briefly reviewed. **Hogan made a motion, seconded by Vale, to approve the minutes as presented.** No further discussion ensued. **The motion passed 15-0-1.**

Hogan welcomed new members Duval and Burns, and returning members Martin, Mendez-Caba, and Sove. He reminded all who are interested in running for office to give appropriate notice to the Secretary. He then asked Krueger to briefly review the recent decisions by the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.

A very brief year-in-review was given, first noting the Collegiate Tournament and the 4-wall National Tournaments need identifying adequate venues, which segued to mentioning the opportunity offered by the National Handball Center in St. Louis. Our committees remain busy, and are growing momentum.

Birrell gave the Treasurer report. He commented on our Balance Sheet, funds Summary, and each of the separate accounts. He further noted the income and expense variations in each account compared to the 2024 budget. Membership volume was reviewed. He then noted the challenges at this time to balance the 2025 budget and asked for any input from board members.

At 8:50 a.m. Porter joined the meeting and reclaimed his proxy from Martin.

The **Investment Committee** had very nominal comments this year.

Sove began the **Game Committee** report by stating the Game Rules Housekeeping Subcommittee is adding the word “directly” in the gist of Rule 4.8.B. Blocking. This change has no material effect to the rule. Further regarding rules: there will be more publicity regarding the consequences of a player stopping play in a rally; the intent to come up with better wording of what constitutes “holding still” in a legal block; refusal to outlaw “Tony’s” in 1-wall; and intent to discuss implementing the 1-wall “hinder serve” rules into 3- and 4-wall.

The next game-related topic was the status of the Transgender Protocol. The Board previously determined that the existing protocol was inadequate and needed revision to better align with executive orders and recent national policies. Last year, Game presented an alternative version, which was not adopted and was sent back for minor modifications.

During the discussion on adopting a revised protocol, **Navarro made a motion, seconded by Birrell, to rescind the existing policy and eliminate any formal protocol on the matter.** This led to an extensive



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discussion regarding concerns about competitive fairness. **A vote was ultimately called, and the motion did not pass, with a result of 3-13-0.** As a result, the Board reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining an official Transgender Protocol.

Discussion then shifted to the proposed replacement protocol. During this discussion, **Navarro introduced a motion, seconded by Porter, to revise the protocol to state that individuals assigned male at birth may not compete in women's events.** A similar debate followed, but it concluded when Porter withdrew his second, nullifying the motion.

Given the current legal and policy landscape surrounding transgender participation in sports, the Board determined that maintaining a formal protocol remains in its best interest. Accordingly, the proposed replacement protocol was returned to Game for further refinement and will be resubmitted for review at the next Board meeting. Meanwhile, the existing protocol remains in effect.

A topic was brought up offering official USHA Referee Certification to non-members as a method of engaging more rules knowledge and perhaps soliciting membership. Discussion centered on these merits versus giving away perks merited through membership. This was returned to Game for resolution.

The next Game topic was changing the dates of the 4-Wall Junior Nationals away from the current week between Christmas and New Year's. This date has an effect on entries. The negatives are: it is hard on family time during that week; flight costs are higher during that week; it is cold and flu season; weather is an issue regarding travel. Staff agrees with changing the dates, and suggests a time in the middle of August. It was agreed to prepare a survey to our affected membership.

**The Promotion Committee Report** was next. The World Handball Council is suggesting to change the cycle of the 1-Wall and 4-Wall World Tournaments. They are proposing to have a World tournament every year, while breaking up the combination of 1-Wall and 4-Wall the same year. Handball is spreading worldwide and having more frequent World events helps sustain the interest. First, the 1-Wall tournament will be held in 2026, followed by the 4-Wall tournament in 2027. The WHC is anticipating USHA approval of the proposal by having New York bid to host the 2026 1-Wall World Tournament. **A motion was made by Birrell, seconded by Mendez-Caba, to approve the USHA bid to host the 2026 1-Wall World Championships in New York City, and chaired by Paul Williams and the ICHA.** It was made clear the ICHA is eager to assume responsibility for managing the event, and has already met with their mayor and set a mid-September date. **The ICHA will take the lead in fund raising. The motion was passed 16-0-0.** The 2025 tournament schedule was then reviewed, noting only the 3-wall juniors and the 4-wall juniors have yet to find a host venue.

The **Hall of Fame** report was reviewed, which included a request for ratification of their 2025 Hall of Fame nominees. **Vale made a motion, seconded by Birrell, to accept the Hall of Fame slate as presented. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.**

Hogan presented the **Collegiate Report** from Committee Chair Mike Wells. The committee is functioning well and all is on track for the national tournament. Mike Wells is the current chair, and immediate past Collegiate Committee chair Nate Frank is to be commended for his work. The committee has a goal of increasing players by reaching out to junior programs and develop a pipeline to collegiate play by disseminating knowledge and opportunities offered by all the collegiate programs participating in the USHA collegiate tournament. This will be accomplished by creating a special tab on our web site.



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At this time the Board engaged in a Zoom call concerning selecting a desired logo for the forthcoming National Handball Center. The intent of the logo is to lift the knowledge of the national center, elevate the facility, excite the audience and grow the sport. Two images were presented. Discussion ensued regarding colors and fonts; size; usage, such as decals, merchandise, coins, bottles, etc. **A motion was made by Birrell, seconded by Martin, to adopt ID SET 1 as the preferred choice of the USHA. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.** This selection will be submitted to our National Handball Center partner for ratification.

The First Ace continues to focus on junior programs. There were twenty applications for Bill Bohr Grants this year, consisting of junior programs as well as collegiate programs. The Committee's choices for funding were presented. **A motion was made by Curtner, seconded by Porter, to approve the First Ace Bill Bohr Grants as presented. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned for lunch at 12:00 pm, and reconvened at 1:01 pm. Porter was absent and gave his proxy vote to Martin.

Personnel was next up, and Chair Rob Birrell joined the meeting by Zoom call. Krueger and Esser were asked to leave the meeting. The staff summary evaluation of our Executive Director was reviewed first, followed by the rest of the staff. All were reviewed positively. The salary structure for each was reviewed as well as bonuses, and the results were noted by Treasurer Birrell for inclusion in the 2025 budget.

Krueger and Esser returned to the meeting, which was resumed with the **Technical Committee** report. Bracket Ace was very popular at the collegiate nationals, and greatly simplified the control desk operations. It is a success. The Court Data Base on the web site is still in business and being used and updated.

The next report was on Board and Committee Resolution and Procedures. A task force was convened last year to develop changes. They came up with nine proposals for the board to consider and adopt:

1. Each committee shall publish on the USHA website a detailed list of tasks and procedures, including sub-committees;
2. Board members shall hold positions on two Committees;
3. Board members shall recruit and mentor memberships, and develop succession plans;
4. The Board shall meet four times a year. The Winter board meeting will still be held in person in Tucson in January, focusing on budget and yearly goals. Spring, Summer and Fall shall be abbreviated business Zoom meetings.
5. Non-disclosure/confidentiality forms will be signed by not only Board members, but also by members of committees where dealing with sensitive or proprietary information as designated by the Board.
6. The Personnel Committee shall solicit, review and evaluate applications for committee appointments, to be provided to the Chairs and Officers for eventual selection.
7. Each Committee shall elect their Chair annually after the Winter Board Meeting subject to confirmation by the Board.
8. Committee reports shall be submitted in a timely fashion. Staff summary reports shall be submitted weekly. Board reports shall be submitted as produced. All reports shall be archived in an online area accessible to all staff, committee and Board members.



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9. A new Budget Committee shall be created, consisting of three Board Members appointed by the President. The committee shall have oversight over the administration of the annual budget, assist in developing the proposed budget prior to the winter Board Meeting, provide monthly assessment of revenue and expenses, and provide quarterly assessment of Budget vs Actual expenses.

The Board was given the rest of Saturday and the evening to review these suggestions, and approval was tabled until Sunday.

The next topic was a return to the Game Committee for a report on an infraction occurring during the 2024 4-wall Junior National Tournament. The facts were discussed as well as the Infraction Committee's decision. **A motion was made by Sove, seconded by Vale, to approve the decision and action developed by the committee. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.**

Further in Game was a proposal to become the prime owner/distributor of the ACE, LLC ONE and 55 balls. Discussion centered on current quality control breakage issues with the ONE ball, the inexperience of staff in managing a ball business, the question of whether the USHA wants to be in the ball business, and concerns about adding to our already large back log of ball inventory. **A motion was made by Sove, seconded by Vale, to decline all purchase options at this time. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.**

Personnel was reconvened to finalize staff salaries for the budget. Krueger and Esser were once again asked to leave the meeting. Discussion centered on the amount of salary and bonus increases each deserved and the effect on the budget. At 4:05 pm Hogan had to leave the meeting, giving his proxy vote to Vale. As Vice President, Vale took charge of the meeting. **A motion was made by Navarro, seconded by Nichols, to approve the salary increases presented. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0. Subsequently, another motion was made by Vale, seconded by Mendez-Caba, to approve the bonus structure for 2025 as presented. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.**

No further agenda items remained and the Saturday session was adjourned at 4:18 pm.

## **Sunday, January 26, 2025.**

President Hogan called the meeting to order at 8:32 am. All were present except Porter, who gave his proxy vote to Martin.

Birrell began with finalizing the 2025 budget. Adjustments were made in the Operating and Promotion budgets, as well as deciding on the amount of ELF interest contributions. Thus, Birrell presented a balance budget. **A motion was made by Martin, seconded by Van Arsdale, to accept the 2025 budget as presented. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.**

Attention was directed to the 2025 election of board members and assigning recruitment responsibilities. For the upcoming At-Large positions, Martin was assigned Curtner's position and Van Arsdale was assigned Birrell's position. For the regional Board members, Sove was assigned Southern California, Holguin assigned the Southwest region, and Hogan assigned the Northeast region.

The Board was then polled for nominations for Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. No other names were added other than the current incumbents. **Martin made a motion, seconded by Langmack, to accept**



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**the slate by acclamation. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.** Vale remains Vice-President, Sove remains Secretary, Birrell remains Treasurer.

The discussion of Board and Committee Resolution and Procedures was revisited. Nominal discussion ensued, as there was no dissenting opinions offered. **Wohl made a motion, seconded by Nichols, to accept all eight Resolutions and Procedures, to take effect in 2025 as soon as the bylaws are reworded accordingly. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed, 15-0-1.** Note this is a 2/3 majority vote, allowing for the bylaw to be amended.

The Board was then polled to acquire nominations to fill the three remaining seats on the executive Board. Names offered were Martin, Mendez-Caba, and Langmack. **Burns made a motion, seconded by Duval, to accept the slate by acclamation. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.** The Executive Committee is now comprised of President Hogan, Vice President Vale, Secretary Sove, Treasurer Birrell, Martin, Mendez-Caba, and Langmack.

Board members were then asked to review their committee membership and make changes, if applicable. Burns and Duval were given their preferred committee assignments.

The final session comprised of going around the table asking each board member their goals and expectations for 2025. All members participated eagerly.

**A motion was made by Martin, seconded by Porter, to adjourn the meeting. No discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.**

Hogan adjourned the meeting at 10:08 am.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Sove".

Tom Sove, Secretary  
2-5-25