

# Post Meeting Comments

## For the Board Meeting held

09-18-02

Kennedy Senior Center, Natick, Mass

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#### **I. Jim Krycka – 09-20-02**

##### **A. Observations**

The following are my observations from last night's Board meeting and suggestions for improvement of future Board meetings.

Despite going nearly 5 hours and not quite finishing the agenda, I view the Board meeting as having been quite successful. While we can and should strive to conduct much of our business via e-mail, there is great value in meeting face-to-face and having an n-way interactive discussion. Several items benefited from this type of discussion such as the LCD projector selection process and feedback on the endgame course proposal.

I was particularly pleased to see three club members attend the meeting and actively participate! Having a forum where other members can get involved is a very valuable side benefit of holding "live" Board meetings.

The only controversial issue was the establishment of a schedule of regular Board meetings, passing by only a 3-2 margin. I really believe this policy change will be a positive one for the following reasons:

1. It should eliminate marathon meetings. All of the Board meetings I've attended since 1999 have been lengthy affairs.
2. Since they are targeted for a given month, there is plenty of leeway to pick a day that maximizes attendance.
3. We can and should cancel a quarterly meeting if there is very little business to conduct. Alternatively, we can schedule a meeting for 6:30-7:15 on a Tuesday night if there is a small amount of pressing business that requires an interactive discussion. I expect some meetings to be cancelled, especially the July one, if we continue to work at taking care of routine things via e-mail.
4. A full set of reports certainly doesn't have to be made at every meeting (more on that later); some may require no reports or only very brief ones (the financial one comes to mind).
5. A 2-hour or thereabouts Board meeting will make for a better "experience", particularly for non-Board members. And remember, those who are interested enough to attend a Board meeting are likely to be future volunteers or officers. Let's not discourage them.

##### **B. What was done right?**

1. An agenda was posted early and updated frequently (thanks, Mark). There was plenty of time for everyone to add items if they wished.
2. Start and end times were agreed to beforehand. We ran over, but this should be less of an issue in the future with more frequent meetings.
3. Discussion was conducted in an informal manner, but was well moderated.
4. Many of the reports were written and most posted beforehand. This saved a lot of time and they can be easily incorporated in the meeting report/archive. Excellent!

### **C. Suggestions for improvement.**

1. The agenda should have estimated times for each section. This does several things. It helps us budget our time better and keep on track. Non-members who may not want to attend the whole meeting can plan better when to arrive. Howard's proposal, for example, wasn't discussed until at least 3 hours into the meeting. He had no way of knowing how long the preceding items would take. This is discourteous to someone who is volunteering to start a new program.
2. In general, schedule items that require input/presentation from non-Board members near the start of the meeting.
3. A standing agenda item should be a summary of decisions made via e-mail voting since the last meeting. This also serves to capture this information in the minutes and for dissemination to the membership/archives.
4. With the advent of quarterly meetings, I suggest that a full set of reports (from the Treasurer, Program Director, President, study group, etc) be given at the January Board meeting. Small updates (especially financial) can be made at the other quarterly meetings and other reports only if there is a clear need. We should strive to not burden folks with unnecessary reports.
5. In addition to whatever new business needs to be conducted, the quarterly meeting should serve to focus on activities for the next quarter (which tend to be seasonal). For example:
  - a) The January Board meeting should have the full complement of annual status reports (ie, the stuff we spent the first 2 hours on yesterday). The info in these reports would be conveyed in very condensed form at the Annual general membership meeting later in the month. This is also an opportunity to take care of end-of-year loose ends.
  - b) The April meeting might focus on the Summer program.
  - c) The July meeting might focus on the Study group and prepare for the fall (the "new" season).
  - d) The October meeting would logically focus on preparing for the November elections.
6. Keep a draft agenda on line for the upcoming meeting. This will keep "in front of us" items that are important to discuss, and probably will serve to spark e-mail discussion (or even resolution) beforehand. Having a tentative agenda provides a framework and helps us gauge how much work needs to be done. It may also tell us that we should cancel the next quarterly meeting if there are insufficient items!

## **II. Neil Cousin – 09-20-02**

### **A. Overall Comment on the meeting**

I thought the board meeting was very productive despite starting late and running well behind schedule.

### **B. LCD Projector**

I had to leave before the Projector discussion was held. As person who has used LCD projectors you need to be very careful not to get a low end machine that will require the room to be pitch black to use, especially for the book club who will be going back and forth between the boards and the projector. It is well suited for the study group, although I think it is just a fancy demo board and not necessary. The current demo boards can be used with dozens of people in the study group room and they are currently collecting dust in the closet.

### **C. On remaining on the board**

After going through the board meeting last night and having seen the approval for quarterly meetings (plus the general meeting) in 2003, in addition to playing (and being a TD) at the club on Tuesdays and wanting to participate in the newly approved Book Study Group, I would **not** like to continue on the board in 2003. I am sure that with more meetings each year that they will not run that late each time but it is very difficult for me to make that significant of a time commitment in addition to the other things I have mentioned.

### **D. On the argument for meetings that it is "better to schedule them and cancel them if not needed"**

The argument seems idealistic and I would prefer to step down from the board for a year or two until I can accurately understand the time commitment involved with being a board member. At this point I cannot commit to what is potentially involved in 2003. Currently, the club runs smoothly due to Mark's diligence and hard work. I have been there on a couple of those "3 Tuesdays in 7 years" that he has not attended and clearly there is a significant difference and Mark should be commended for that.

## **E. On adding to the TDs current duties**

I think that the board (particularly the non-TDs) should be careful about asking the current group of TDs to do more. The comparison of a weekend tournament like Foxwoods and our club is like comparing our meeting last night to a board meeting at GE, both are rated chess tournaments and that is where the similarity stops.

Ideally, we would have a TD that doesn't play in the tournament but that is a highly unlikely situation and speaking for myself, I enjoy doing the pairings, registration and clean up, etc.... but the "during the round" responsibilities are currently being shared, perhaps too informally, but I don't play in very many weekend events and want to do well at the club and my primary motivation on Tuesdays is to play my game and not be the subject of constant interruption.

As bit of an aside, I don't know how Mark does it some nights with all the interruptions. It is incumbent upon players to read the Rules of Chess and understand what to do if there is a problem and not just run to a TD at the first sign of a potential issue. Most of the confusion stems from lack of knowledge and has nothing to do with the prospects of finding a TD by way of a hat, scarf or vest.

We (the TDs) cannot be all things to all people and a weakness of a weeknight club is not having a dedicated TD who is just walking around and waiting for a dispute.

Several people (many of whom were not in attendance last night) seem to have little understanding of the workload issues with the TDs and don't mind assigning them more and more tasks.