

Presidents Report 2017 Annual Meeting

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I. Purpose

This report provides an overview of the status of the club and its activities for the preceding year. The President of the club, Matt Phelps, will present and discuss this report with the membership at the Annual meeting of the club to be held on Tuesday, January 17th, 2017. A summary is presented first with more discussion and details provided in the sections that follow.

II. Summary

The club continues to be in good shape. Still not the shape we would like it to be in but able to continue on in the fashion we've become accustomed to under the conditions of our current site.

The major change from last year is the "retirement" of Mark Kaprielian as President of the Club. Mark will continue to provide many services to us, notably he will become the Monthly Tournament Program Director. He will also continue in many other roles, new member orientation, membership database maintenance, etc. Once again, we thank Mark for over 22 years as club President!

There have been a couple changes to the Board of the club apart from Matt becoming President and Mark changing status to a Director. John Bottini has resigned from the Board after many years of service, for which we thank him greatly. The Board voted to appoint Jim Donahue to fill the vacancy. Jim is a long time player at the club, and has recently helped us with insurance questions. We welcome Jim to the Board!

Recently the Corporate Status of the Club was reinstated with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts after it had lapsed. The Club is a 501c(7) corporation. That is, a non-profit, but not a charity, so we can't accept tax deductible donations. See section VII for our future plans on forming a 501c(3) charitable foundation.

Overall attendance has increased very slightly in the past year, hopefully this continues towards our preferred average of 80+ per month. The Open section is within the variance we can expect to see

from time to time, if not slightly improved, but the downward trend of U1400 section continued to the point where we were forced to merge the U1700 section and the U1400 section in January 2017.

My opinion matches Mark's of last year, that the atmosphere of the club has been somewhat "diminished" due to the reduced time available for skittles. The ability for players to discuss their games and seek advice is a key component to the social and educational benefits that are derived from playing at our club.

The Group Class program has not gotten restarted, primarily due to lack of a coordination volunteer. Classes will increase the social aspect of the club as well as serve as a draw for new players. It re-enforces the sense of community which is important for our club. Getting the program going again in the New Year will be a priority.

I continue to ask the membership to please consider the time pressure the staff is under and listen to our prompting at the end of the evening. To please help by picking things up, putting away club sets and help us get things done quickly, calmly and very importantly for all of us, pleasantly.

There are many opportunities for people to assist in both very small and great ways. I encourage you to consider if you can provide time to assist the club either while at the club or away from the club.

III. Club relocation status

Once again, the club was very close to leasing a permanent space. We were in very serious discussions for a site a few miles further west on Route 135, right next to the West Natick commuter rail train station.

Unfortunately, it now looks as if that site will not work for us. Primarily due to the cost of renovations necessary to comply with town fire and occupancy codes.

I had planned to discuss changes to the club that would be necessary when we move to a permanent leased space, but it appears moot at this juncture. If we get close to an agreement on another space, or the situation changes with the current one (not likely), we will discuss options for change with the membership.

Our needs are very challenging. Parking for 100+ cars, occupancy for 125+ people, and off-hours access to the building (not to mention financial restraints) are just a few of the difficult aspects of running a large chess club that make leasing space difficult.

We are committed to relocating but we will remain where we are until a suitable location is found.

We are once again looking at renting a space just for Tuesday nights. This would let us get back to a longer time control. This effort has just now been restarted, so there is no progress to report.

IV. The past year

The past year has been very stable for the club. We continue to operate under the restriction of the Town of Natick, and must all be out of the Community Center by 10:00 PM. This of course limits us to GAME/60 for our monthly tournaments.

A. Attendance

Attendance throughout the year was remarkably stable in the lower to mid 70s. There was an uptick in August and September, but we were back to the average number for the rest of the year. We hope the trend towards 80+ per month continues.

This current average allows us to not lose money each month, and even save a little, but we could always use more players.

B. Time Impact – Start, End, Skittles and Exit impact

In last year's Presidents report, Mark covered many aspects of our time limits at the club that were overall negative. All of these still apply. Foremost of these is the time pressures on the TD staff, and the reduced time for going over games, which hurts the best social part of the club.

C. DGT boards /Game Archive / Live Broadcast

The program continues to be on hold because it became clear very quickly that we could not support the program with the people already volunteering as we also used some TDs to assist.

Possible technology using battery powered microcomputers-on-a-card with Wi-Fi connections may make this more feasible; but again, volunteers to help run the boards, and broadcasts during the night are needed if this is to happen at our current site.

V. Observations

A. From last year

Little has changed from the operations standpoint of the club since last year. We continue to pull in several new players (both new to the club, and new to rated chess) per year.

The improved registration system outlined in last year's report (using QR codes on the registration stickers to scan them into the SwissSys pairing program) continues to work well.

I feel we've been doing a good job getting rounds to start on time. Thankfully, we haven't had the situation of a game still going on when it was time to leave the building.

B. New Observations

- Open Section – Increasing in size, but diminishing in strength

The Open section has been increasing in size getting closer to the ideal of 20, however it seems the strength (average rating) has been going down. Many players are playing up from the U2000 section, and many club masters are busier teaching. It's unclear if the faster time control has dissuaded more masters from playing.

- U1400 Section – Almost gone

The U1400 section continued to decline in attendance to the point where it needed to be merged into the U1700 section in January of 2017.

We will need to re-evaluate our section numbers and boundaries in the coming year.

New Projects

C. **Voicemail System Improvements**

In the past year the club switched to a Google Voice based voicemail system which allows us to get email notifications, and listen to voicemails, on the club computer. The software even attempts to transcribe the voice message into text. This can often have amusing results, but is often “good enough” for TD staff to determine byes and entries in seconds. This has helped reduce the time needed to listen to and enter phone byes and entries.

Part of the system is a “caller-id” like feature based on the phone number that left the message. It is helpful for us if we have up to date contact information on all members, particularly cell phone numbers, to assist with this effort.

VI. **The Future**

A. **Relocation**

Our path forward on relocation is being re-evaluated. We continue to look for a full-time permanent space we can lease, but are now reconsidering renting another site once per week to re-enable slow time control games, and more time for skittles.

B. **Group Class**

We still have been having trouble getting this program restarted. The goal is to have at least one class a month, ideally two and if possible three.

There are two elements needed to make this program work:

- Having instructors with material to present
- Having a program manager to co-ordinate and follow up with Instructors to see that the classes happen.

We generally do not have difficulty in finding Instructors. The difficulty we have is finding a volunteer to run the program. I can provide additional information to anyone who would like to consider volunteering to manage the program.

C. **Online Registration / Accounting / Credit Card Payments**

We have begun the process of researching both online registration systems, and accounting systems. Part of this search is to find a system we can use to accept credit card payments on site as well as for online pre-registration.

There are, of course, many pre-existing products and services out there to consider. This work is ongoing, and any features the members would like to see would be nice to know.

D. **Forming a 501c(3) Charitable Foundation**

In the coming year, we will be forming a 501c(3) charitable foundation as a separate corporation from that of the club. This will allow us to accept tax deductible donations and perhaps initiate several fundraising efforts. The goal remains leasing permanent space for the club and expanding our offerings.