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Chapter 1 – ACBL GOALS, ORGANIZATION, AND ACTIVITIES

ACBL encourages bridge playing and develops and promotes bridge education by implementing a wide variety of activities. ACBL encourages the game of bridge as a social, recreational, and competitive activity, and strives to attract bridge players to membership in the organization. For example, it sanctions bridge games and related bridge activities, and it conducts or sanctions championship events at club, unit, and district levels, at North American Bridge Championship tournaments, and at the international level. It formulates rules for all tournaments and games conducted under its auspices, and it supervises and regulates all bridge activities over which it has jurisdiction. It develops and maintains standards of membership, conduct and ethical behavior. In addition, it maintains a relative playing performance rating of all ACBL members by awarding and recording the masterpoints earned by the winners and high finishers in all sanctioned bridge events.

ACBL publishes The Bridge Bulletin, a monthly magazine for ACBL members and produces many other publications that help advance bridge, including a current directory of ACBL-sanctioned bridge games.

ACBL encourages the use of bridge games as a means of raising funds for charity by conducting and promoting charity games. It assists the ACBL Charity Foundation and the Canadian Bridge Federation Charitable Fund in the care and disbursement of charity proceeds.

ACBL promotes bridge education through an accredited teacher program, and various school programs. The ACBL Educational Foundation raises money for bridge education and disburses these funds through grants.

ACBL fosters bridge globally by working with other national bridge organizations and the World Bridge Federation in compiling the international code of the “Laws of Rubber Bridge” and the “Laws of Duplicate Bridge”, and by providing means for our members to compete in international bridge meets.

SECTION ONE: MEMBERSHIP

I. ELIGIBILITY

Any person may apply for membership in ACBL. ACBL may grant such application unless there is cause to refer the application to the ACBL Board of Directors. Causes for referral include, but are not limited to, previous expulsion from ACBL or previous expulsion or suspension from another bridge organization.

Any member, including a life or honorary member, normally shall be a member of the unit within whose jurisdiction he or she resides. For exceptions, see Chapter 3, Section Three, I. Every member in each category of membership shall be subject to regulations established by the ACBL Board of Directors requiring binding and compulsory arbitration to settle disputes involving ACBL and its members.

II. CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP

A. GENERAL MEMBER

1. Will be a member as long as dues are current;
2. Will have the right to vote in any election in which the general membership is the electorate as long as he or she is a member in good standing;
3. Will have an obligation to adhere to the rules and regulations of the ACBL;

4. Will have such limitations as imposed by rules and regulations of the ACBL or actions of an ACBL disciplinary body;
5. Will be able to run for an elected ACBL position as long as he or she is 18 years of age or older, and there are no other age requirements for the position.
- 6.

B. LIFE MEMBER

1. Will be a member through the member's life time;
2. Will have the right to vote in any election in which the general membership is the electorate as long as he or she is a member in good standing;
3. Will have an obligation to adhere to the rules and regulations of the ACBL;
4. Will have such limitations as imposed by rules and regulations of the ACBL or actions of an ACBL disciplinary body;
5. Will be able to run for an elected ACBL position as long as he or she is 18 years of age or older, and there are no other age requirements for the position;
6. Will be required to remit an annual service fee in order to receive the following services:
 1. Receive official publication of ACBL.
 2. Participate in some ACBL-sanctioned events.
 3. Receive any subsidy or remuneration from ACBL.
 4. Participate in and receive recognition for achievement in masterpoint races.
 5. Have an article published on the ACBL website or in its official publication.

C. HONORARY MEMBER

The ACBL Board of Directors may elect honorary members according to guidelines adopted by the Board of Directors.

III. PROCESSING THE MEMBERSHIP

A. NEW MEMBERS

To become a member of ACBL, an applicant fills out a new member application, which is submitted with the appropriate fee to ACBL. ACBL mails the member a new member packet, which contains the permanent membership card and pertinent information about ACBL.

B. NON-LIFE MASTER MEMBERS

Currently ACBL prints and mails membership renewal invoices in a timely manner before each membership expires and again at the due date if it is still unpaid. Each member is sent a permanent membership card soon after first joining ACBL. If this card is lost, the member can get a new one for a fee by contacting the ACBL Club Membership Department. See Appendix G.

ACBL grants members a one-month grace period after their membership expiration date. If their dues are still not paid at that time, they are put on an "inactive" status. The return envelopes ACBL sends with the dues invoices are addressed directly to the bank that processes the payments (one in Canada and one in the United States). The bank deposits the checks and sends ACBL a computer record for updating the members' records.

C. LIFE MASTERS

Life Masters who are not Life Members are treated the same as Non-Life Master members.

D. LIFE MEMBERS

ACBL invoices Life Members for their service fees in a timely manner before they are due and again at the due date if they still are not paid. If the Life Member does not respond by the due date, ACBL puts him or her on an "unpaid" status. Life Members who do not pay their service fees are still active ACBL members, but they receive neither The Bridge Bulletin nor masterpoint confirmation notices. In addition, they are not eligible to have their names published in any of the masterpoint races, or be included on any Life Master upgrade list, or receive a free trip to any NABC or any event for which ACBL provides a monetary reimbursement, or receive discounted entries at ACBL-sanctioned tournaments or play in NABC+ events.

E. MULTI-YEAR, HOUSEHOLD, PATRON AND STUDENT MEMBERSHIPS

ACBL offers multi-year memberships for three years at reduced rates. Household memberships are offered to two members living at the same address at a reduced rate for the two. Household members receive one Bridge Bulletin instead of two. Patron memberships are offered at a greatly increased rate, entitling such members to a number of additional membership benefits.

A Household Patron membership is also available. Student and Youth memberships are available at a reduced rate. See Appendix G for prices and fees

IV. DISCIPLINE OF A MEMBER

ACBL, its districts, and its units through an appropriate disciplinary body may discipline a member, providing the disciplinary procedures do not violate the member's rights as described in Chapter 11 and are in accordance with the ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations. See Chapter 11 and Appendix D.

An ACBL member shall be deemed to be in "good standing" when such member's dues, if dues are required, are current and such member is not:

- expelled,
- serving a term of suspension,
- serving indefinite probation,
- serving a probation the initial term of which was 24 or more months,
- serving a term of probation following a suspension, the initial term of which was in excess of 90 days. A member who is not in good standing as defined herein shall not be entitled to serve in any elected or appointed position in ACBL.

V. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

A. REGULAR ANNUAL MEETING

An annual membership meeting is scheduled to be held during the Summer NABC. Resolutions and motions adopted by a majority vote of those present and voting are referred to the Board of Directors and the Board of Governors for further review and possible action.

B. SPECIAL MEETING

The ACBL President, the ACBL Board of Directors or the membership (upon the written request of at least one per cent of the total membership) may call special membership meetings.

C. QUORUM RULES

A quorum at any meeting consists of at least 250 members representing a majority of districts provided that no more than 20% of the required 250 members present belong to any one district.

SECTION TWO: ACBL ORGANIZATION

ACBL is the parent organization whose territory includes the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Bermuda. The members of ACBL are the base of the organization. Every ACBL member belongs to a unit, which is usually a defined geographical area. All units belong to one of the current 25 districts. These 25 districts encompass the geographic area of ACBL.

Units run sectional tournaments, and higher rated tournaments when given the right to do so by their district. Districts run regional tournaments and assist with NABC tournaments held within their region. The district may ask a member unit to run a regional tournament and/or assist with an NABC.

There are other entities (called clubs) which run ACBL-sanctioned bridge games. See Chapter 4. Two major types of duplicate bridge sanctions are issued by ACBL: those issued annually for regularly scheduled masterpoint games at clubs, club championships, charity game

championships, and membership tournaments; and those issued individually, as requested by ACBL affiliated districts and units.

Among the latter are: all unit-wide, district-wide, and ACBL-wide games; unit championships and charity events; sectional and regional championships; North American bridge championships; and special events such as team playoffs, pair trials, and international events. ACBL sanctions and promotes all of these games.

I. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The ACBL Board of Directors is the legislative body of ACBL. The Board is composed of one member from each district of ACBL (there are currently 25 districts). There is only one vote per district which is cast by the District Director, or in his/her absence by the First Alternate Director, and in his/her absence by the Second Alternate Director.

A. ELECTION

Each member of the Board of Directors is elected in accordance with the Regulations for the Conduct of ACBL Elections and Article V of the ACBL Bylaws.

B. MEETINGS

The Board of Directors currently holds three regular meetings each year, subject to yearly review by the ACBL Board of Directors. Special meetings may be called by the ACBL President and must be called upon the written request of a majority of the members of the Board of Directors. A quorum at meetings of the Board of Directors is a majority.

C. ACBL OFFICERS

The Board of Directors elects the ACBL officers. All officers serve until their successors take office.

PRESIDENT: The ACBL President is elected for a one-year term from among the members of the Board of Directors. The President's term of office begins on January 1 of the year following election.

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD: On expiration of the term of office, the president automatically becomes chairman of the Board of Directors and has voting rights provided the chairman is an elected Director.

TREASURER: The treasurer is elected for a one-year term, which begins on May 1 following his or her election. The treasurer may attend all meetings of the Board of Directors but may not vote unless he or she is an elected Board member. The treasurer is a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: The Executive Committee consists of the ACBL president, the chairman of the Board of Directors, treasurer (non-voting member) and three other members of the Board (one from the Eastern Zone, one from the Central Zone, and one from the Western Zone). The other Board members of his or her zone elect each of the three Board representatives for a three-year term. If the treasurer is a Zonal representative, the Executive Committee will have five members. The purpose of the Executive Committee is to transact business of a time sensitive nature requiring action between Board of Directors meetings.

D. DUTIES OF THE BOARD

The general duties of the Board of Directors are to manage, conduct, supervise and control the business and activities of ACBL unless such authority is specifically granted by statute, by the Certificate of Incorporation, by the Articles of Incorporation or by the Bylaws to a different specific body. Specific duties of the Board of Directors include, but are not limited to:

1. Sanction all ACBL-sponsored bridge events;
2. Approve tournament sites for the Spring, Summer and Fall North American Bridge Championships;
3. Approve budgets for the Spring, Summer and Fall North American Bridge Championships;
4. Determine masterpoint requirements for ranking of players;
5. Provide a mechanism for the awarding of masterpoints to members;
6. Establish Life Master requirements;
7. Provide for an annual audit of all funds of ACBL;
8. Provide written reports to the Board of Governors;
9. Employ personnel as necessary to carry out the programs of ACBL;
10. Adopt regulations establishing binding and compulsory arbitration to settle disputes between ACBL and its members;
11. Initiate and/or consider Bylaw amendments;
12. Designate those individuals who sign all checks or demands for money and notes of ACBL;
13. Adopt an annual budget; designate funds of ACBL for ACBL purposes in accordance with the Certificate of Incorporation, the Articles of Incorporation and the ACBL Bylaws;
14. Acquire, hold, administer, maintain, and dispose of all property of ACBL;
15. Establish regulations for the chartering of units;
16. Establish regulations for the payment of annual dues for members and annual service charges for Life Members;
17. Establish regulations for the selection of Honorary Members;
18. Establish guidelines for units and districts;
19. Perform such other duties as may be assigned in the ACBL Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, or as prescribed in the parliamentary authority.

II. BYLAWS AND BYLAW AMENDMENTS

ACBL operates under a set of bylaws established by the ACBL Board of Directors and the ACBL Board of Governors and ratified by the ACBL membership. The Board of Directors or the Board of Governors at any regular or special meeting of either body may amend the Bylaws. (The Board proposing the amendment is hereinafter referred to as the initiating body; the Board reviewing the proposed amendment is hereinafter referred to as the secondary body.)

The proposed amendment must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the initiating body. It must then be published in The Bridge Bulletin at least 30 days prior to the second reading by the initiating body. If approved upon a second reading by the initiating body, the proposed amendment is then referred to the secondary body. If approved by a majority vote of the secondary body, the proposed amendment is then submitted to the membership at a regular or special meeting. Upon approval by the membership the amendment is adopted.

The Bylaws may also be amended by the membership by providing a petition as outlined in Article X of the Bylaws. The petition is submitted to the Board of Governors and the Board of Directors for review and recommendation. The proposed amendment and recommendations are to be published in the Bridge Bulletin and then included on the agenda for the next Annual membership meeting. If approved by 2/3 of the members present and voting, the amendment is adopted.

NOTE: Please refer to the ACBL Bylaws, Article X, for a more detailed explanation of how the Bylaws may be amended.

III. BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The ACBL Board of Governors is composed primarily of five members from each ACBL district. Two of these five members are elected to serve as the first and second alternate district directors and the other three are elected as representatives per ACBL Bylaws. The term of office on the Board of Governors is currently three years, but at all times shall be in accordance with Article V of the ACBL Bylaws. All ACBL past presidents and all past Board of Governors chairmen are members-at-large of the Board of Governors.

A. MEETINGS

The Board of Governors currently holds a regular meeting at each of the three annual NABCs. Special meetings may be called by the chairman of the Board of Governors and must be called upon the written request of a majority of the members of the Board of Governors.

B. DUTIES

The duties of the Board of Governors are:

- To receive and review reports of the actions taken by the ACBL Board of Directors at each of its meetings;
- To make recommendations to the ACBL Board of Directors and to receive reports on said recommendations;
- To initiate and/or consider amendments to the ACBL bylaws;
- To ratify changes in ACBL district boundaries;
- To elect the Board of Governors chairman and vice-chairman;
- To approve new ACBL Life Members and Life Masters;
- To consider matters originating at membership meetings for review and further disposition;
- To perform such other duties as may be specified in the ACBL Bylaws or as may be assigned by the ACBL Board of Directors.

IV. ACBL DISTRICTS

The territory under ACBL's jurisdiction is divided into as many geographical districts as the ACBL Board of Directors, with the approval of the ACBL Board of Governors, shall designate. There are currently 25 geographically defined districts within ACBL territory.

A. DISTRICT BYLAWS

Each district shall establish bylaws. The ACBL Board of Directors also empowers the district to exercise the prerogatives assigned to it by ACBL. The prerogatives given to the districts may increase or decrease in scope by the passage of new regulations.

B. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Districts have certain rights and responsibilities which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A vacancy in the office of District Director shall be filled by the First Alternate Director for the unexpired remainder of the term. A vacancy in the office of First Alternate Director shall be filled by the Second Alternate Director for the remainder of the term. A vacancy in the office of Second Alternate Director shall be filled in accordance with regulations established by the affected district organization.
- In conjunction with a designated (non-home) district, the district may approve a member's joining a unit in the designated district rather than a unit in his or her home district.
- The district may make recommendations to the ACBL Board of Directors on the consolidation, division or dissolution of units within its boundaries.
- The district must have a tournament coordinator who is responsible for approving tournament dates and schedules of events for sectional and regional tournaments within the district, and for helping resolve tournament date conflicts within and outside the district.
- The district must have a designated electronic contact. ACBL may require business between ACBL and districts to be conducted electronically.
- The district serves as a clearinghouse for scheduling sectional tournaments in the district and for coordinating such schedules with neighboring districts. When an intra district dispute or misunderstanding occurs, the district, as empowered by its member units, may act as fact finder, arbitrator, or both.
- The district serves as the host organization for NABCs held within its geographical boundaries. It may, at its sole discretion, delegate such sponsorship to a unit(s) within its geographical boundaries.
- The district organizes and operates the regional tournaments assigned to it, but it may assign such tournaments to units within its jurisdiction.
- The district organizes and conducts district-wide contests to select winners to represent it in the various flights of the ACBL Grand National Teams finals and the ACBL North American Pairs finals.

- The district has control over its own disciplinary matters and must have a District Disciplinary and a District Appellate Committee. See Chapter 11 and Appendix D, *The ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations*.

V. ACBL UNITS

An ACBL unit is an association of players to which the ACBL Board of Directors grants a charter. The charter defines the geographic boundaries of the unit and lists its powers and authorities. Only the ACBL Board of Directors may alter or revoke a unit charter. For additional information concerning units, See Chapter 3.

VI. SANCTIONED BRIDGE GAMES

ACBL sanctions masterpoint games held at tournaments and in bridge clubs. These sanctions authorize the awarding of ACBL masterpoints. The quantity and color of the masterpoints awarded are determined by the type and size of the game. See Chapter 2.

A. TOURNAMENTS

ACBL sanctions events at three levels of tournaments; national, regional, and sectional. See Chapter 6 for more information about tournaments. Events at these tournaments award platinum, gold, red, or silver points. See Chapter 2.

B. BRIDGE GAMES IN CLUBS

ACBL sanctions bridge games run on a regular basis by entities called clubs. The regulations that govern the sanctioning and operation of club games appear in Chapter 4 of this Handbook.

VII. ADMINISTRATION

ACBL Headquarters is located at 6575 Windchase Boulevard, Horn Lake MS 38637-1523.

This building houses all ACBL departments except the tournament director field representative offices.

A. ACBL ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS

The administrative departments of ACBL are as follows:

- Accounting
- Club and Member Services
- Editorial
- Education
- Executive/Administrative
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- NABC Meeting Services
- Office Services
- Tournaments
- Warehouse

B. EXECUTIVE PERSONNEL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: The Board of Directors employs and supervises a chief executive officer who is responsible for operating ACBL. In addition to carrying out his administrative duties, the chief executive officer attends all meetings of the ACBL Board of Directors, the ACBL Board of Governors, and the membership, but does not vote.

ACBL COUNSEL: The ACBL counsel attends meetings of the ACBL Board of Directors and the ACBL Board of Governors. The counsel gives opinions on points of civil or parliamentary law and may engage in debates but does not vote. The counsel handles the legal affairs of ACBL.

AUDITOR: An auditing firm appointed by the ACBL Board of Directors is responsible for preparing and certifying the annual financial statements of ACBL.

VIII. ACBL CHARITY FOUNDATION CORPORATION

The ACBL Charity Foundation Corporation, a tax-exempt charitable organization, provides funding for various charitable programs through a variety of charity games which the Club and Member Services administer. See Chapter 8.

IX. ACBL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

The ACBL Educational Foundation is a non-profit organization that helps bring the challenge and enjoyment of bridge to people of all ages. Established in 1987 to support bridge education throughout North America, this Foundation is funded by tax-deductible contributions. The Educational Foundation uses its resources exclusively for promoting bridge. See Chapter 8.

X. ACBL LAWS COMMISSION

The ACBL Laws Commission consists of a minimum of nine and a maximum of 15 members. The President of ACBL with the approval of the ACBL Board of Directors appoints the members and each serves for a five-year term. The Commission, in cooperation with the Laws Commission of the World Bridge Federation, prepares the Laws under which both duplicate and rubber bridge games are governed. These Laws are reviewed and revised periodically by the Commission, also in cooperation with the Laws Commission of the World Bridge Federation.

SECTION THREE: CONFERENCES

An ACBL conference is a voluntary association of neighboring units and/or districts organized to advance the purposes of ACBL and its member units.

Since a conference is a voluntary association, its control over its own member units extends only to the authority relinquished to it by its member units and/or districts. A conference may be organized to:

- Schedule and supervise regional tournaments in the designated area, when authorized by the district to which the regional was allocated.
- Publish and distribute a newsletter that contains news, tournament schedules, and other matters of interest.
- Meet and work together with units, districts, and other conferences on matters of mutual interest.
- Reduce inter-unit and inter-district confrontations.
- Promote attendance at all tournaments in the conference area.

SECTION FOUR: INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

ACBL participates in international bridge activities through overseas clubs and through the World Bridge Federation.

I. OVERSEAS CLUBS

ACBL issues sanctions in foreign countries to games in a few clubs, either on military installations or where there are heavy concentrations of U. S. citizens. Otherwise, ACBL does not encroach on the areas of other national bridge organizations. ACBL will sanction a game in the area of another National Bridge Organization (NBO), but only with that NBO's approval.

II. THE WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION

A. PURPOSES OF THE WBF

The World Bridge Federation is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to:

- Promote, foster and promulgate the game of contract bridge throughout the world;
- Federate national contract bridge associations in all countries;
- Devise methods and conduct competitions to award international or world championship titles;
- Establish standard laws for its contests adopting the International Code and supplementing it as may be required, but supplementary matter must be consistent with the Code.

B. ACTIVITIES OF THE WBF

The activities of the World Bridge Federation include:

- The promotion, fostering and promulgation of the game of Duplicate Bridge throughout the world;
- The provision of a central organization for the co-ordination of necessary revisions to the laws and appeals;
- The organization of Championships on a world-wide basis;
- The promotion of a Masterpoints Scheme for recognizing achievement in World and Zonal contests;
- The provision of assistance and advice to NBOs on matters pertaining to the Laws and Appeals;
- The provision of a teaching program and teaching materials www.wbfteaching.org free of charge to assist bridge teachers;
- The maintenance of necessary central records;

C. ACBL-WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION RELATIONSHIP

The American Contract Bridge League's four member countries - Bermuda, Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. are charter members of the World Bridge Federation (WBF). With the exception of Bermuda which is in Zone 5, they form WBF Zone 2, one of eight world-wide Zonal Conferences, which is geographically coincident with ACBL.

Each member country (called a National Bridge Organization or NBO) may designate a Delegate to the WBF Congress. The Congress has all the powers in the WBF not delegated under its

Constitution or Bylaws to the Executive Council and serves as an advisory body to the Executive. Meetings of the Congress are held in even-numbered years at the World Championships.

Zone 2 is entitled to five representatives on the WBF Executive Council. The representatives are elected by the ACBL Board of Directors.

Membership in the Executive Council includes five representatives from each of Zone 1 (Europe) and Zone 2, one representative from each of Zones 3 through 8, and the WBF President. The management of the affairs, property and business of the WBF is vested in the Executive. Meetings are held each year in conjunction with the World Championships.

D. WBF CHAMPIONSHIPS AND ACBL

World Bridge Federation Championships are usually held sometime in September or October according to a four-year cycle. For more information on WBF Championships go to <http://www.worldbridge.org/>.