

Minutes for WFencing Meeting (#6)

**January 10, 2020, 1:00 pm Eastern via Zoom**

**Attendees:**

**Vinnie Bradford  
Ina Harizanova  
Molly Hill  
Susan Jennings  
Jen Oldham  
Cathleen Randall  
Kathy Vail  
Iris Zimmermann**

Facilitator: Cathleen Randall

Note-Taker: Cathleen

**AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order and Check In**
- II. Review of Past Meeting**
- III. Work of the Day:**
  - A. Update from Jan NAC Charlotte**
    1. Summary of Social Meet & Greet (Jen)  
In lobby of main hotel works well because people walk by  
Earlier in the NAC work better  
7 ppl attended
    2. Summary of women referee group meeting and ideas  
generated (Sue & Molly)  
Well-attended  
Passion & Discussion  
Key ideas (below)  
A Referee sub-group will help with follow up on key ideas/action items  
(Molly & Sue can organize) -- Jen will reach out to start the conversation
    3. Summary of strategic planning meeting and ideas  
generated (Jen & Cathleen & Donna)  
Meeting held Sunday morning of Charlotte NAC.  
USAFencing needs & wants to work with WFencing  
Also mentioned pushing national award named after a woman --  
(Also, the women's National Cups are physically smaller  
than the men's -- another item to work on)

New Director of Education also should be a connection  
The mission of the USA Fencing in many ways allied but some conversation needed about some disconnects  
ex/ "Honor our rich tradition" in USA Fencing language  
Donna in process of developing a strategic plan from work done at this meeting. Will share soon.  
Jen will create a subgroup to refine strategic plan work already done and report to committee as a whole.

What sort of data can we collect at each NAC? What should we track and how should we track it?

Link Vinnie & Alex Gioiella

Vinnie is working on Scorecard

Relevant areas (Vinnie previews items on scorecard draft)

USA Fencing

Coaches

Referees

Armourers (add)

Bout Committee (add)

Committees?

Team Managers

NCAA

Paid Head Coach (not "volunteer assistant")

USFCA

Org rules says have to be a Master to be leadership

Reportcard updates every two years

Create Form to data gather

Decide what we want to track

Referee Usage Report is provided by USAFencing

## B. JO's Meeting -- Jen

What is our plan?

Discussion:

JOs & Nationals are both major events with lots more folks

Good time to "State of Union" update/meeting

This JOs can do this sort of Update

Proposed: Meet & Greet and make open to all. Have "Update" handout with info. Do brief welcome and overview. Distribute flyer to announce meeting -- put on table. Make announcement in venue as well.

Susan Jennings to draft framework document -- post to Google-- do within next 48 hrs. Meet Friday, January 24th, 3pm Eastern, to review as group via Zoom as JO's planning group.

7:00pm on Saturday of JO's in lobby of host hotel. Susan J. & Molly & Kathy Vail to host.

**C. Newsletter** -- Vinnie

Updates:

Some email address returns -- need follow up/update

How to do? Jen will contact w/ email

At JO's ask for ppl to sign up for email

**D. Additional:**

1. Logo (Cathleen & Iris)  
Simplified, circle, W as center (arms reaching out and breaking through), black & white & pop of color → out for design now  
Different from earlier draft
2. Website with ability to take donations (Jen)  
Vinnie has someone who's interested  
Cathleen & Jen need to meet w/Mike
3. Iris' LinkedIn Article Response & Follow Up (Iris)  
In conversation with Sam Cheris
  1. Need to include stakeholders in these conversations
  2. Create talking points for these types of conversations  
Vinnie will send suggested talking points  
We can create collaborative article for publication
4. Articles of Incorporation (Jen and Susan)  
In process
5. JR World Championships are looking for commentators (Iris has conflict this year) -- ability to make color commentary, knowledge of the athletes, broadcast speaking voice all relevant qualities -- let Iris know if anyone might be interested --email her soon and pass along.

Whole week: April 3-10, 2020. Salt Lake City.  
(they won't accept partial week -- this limits woman  
participation -- food for thought)

- IV. **Plan of Work Review** -- *JO's Friday Social Facilitators, Logo finalization process, other*
- V. **Wrap Up** -- Set next meeting, method, and facilitator:

**Next meetings:**

**Friday, January 24th, 3:00pm Eastern, Zoom -- JO's planning group.**

**JO's, Feb 14-18, Columbus**

**7:00pm Saturday, February 15, Lobby of host hotel.**

**Susan J. & Molly & Kathy Vail to host.**

**Friday, February 21, 1:00pm Eastern, Zoom Call**

## **Summary of Main Issues**

**emerging from 1/4/20 WFencing meeting with female referees:**

### **Training & Support**

Training for both technical and interpersonal communication skills (soft skills) emerged as a need. Currently there seems to be no ongoing training about communication and people skills. The ref cadre is looking at incorporating both aspects into training.

*Action item:* Continuing education related to people skills (communication especially). In particular, provide a seminar on diffusing difficult situations, including scenario use. Do this at Summer Nationals. Led by the Referees, within the Cadre.

### **Data Tracking**

The number of women referees at all levels (national, international) is currently unknown and seems not representative of the numbers of women in the USA Fencing's membership. It would be helpful to:

- Gather the data
- Report annually
- Maintain database.

*Action item:* Follow up – connect and then create shared database

### **Referee Commission**

There was a desire for greater representation of female refs on the commission with a goal of equal representation.

*Action item:* Ensure a minimum number of women referees on the Commission is reflective of % women in membership (currently 33%).

### **Sexual Assault/Harassment**

This emerged as a very important workplace issue for referees.

*Action item:* Google Sprint workshop with the Cadre to address issues and responses.

### **Communication**

The group discussed patterns of interactions with/ways of speaking to women referees that are not fitting to their status as professionals.

*Action item:* Professional practices protocol re: best practices of communication with (women) refs/maintaining professional boundaries drafted by members. Possible workshop to follow.

### **Ratings Transparency**

Current and future referees need more clarification on pathways to promotion and evaluation. Needs to be written and clearly defined.

### **Regional Mentoring Program**

Additional support for refs is needed.

*Action item:* At each NAC, assign Regional Support person for referees. Cadre members working on this.

### **Working with Coaches**

Coaches' communication with refs presents challenges of maintaining boundaries and respectful communication.

*Possible Action Item:* Try out a day of silence – nothing but encouragement to the fencer and no communication with the refs (no questions even) – on a Youth Day perhaps?

### **What's up with Sabre**

The perception is that sabre in particular is even more difficult for women refs. Why is this? What would be next steps?

### **Understanding Assigning**

While assigning is a complex task, knowing how the process works would be helpful. This is aligned to rating transparency.

### **“Grey Tigers”**

Creating a pathway for senior members of the cadre (“grey tigers”) that honors their experience and leadership while acknowledging shifts in abilities and interpretations emerged as an area of concern and care.

*Action item:* Look into the issue and develop a model for “grey tigers.”