



Massachusetts Middle School Speech League

Spring 2021 Meeting
Saturday June 13th, 9:00 a.m.
Zoom

- I. Meeting called to order at 9:13 by Lis.
- II. ROLL CALL: Board Member-at-Large Kim Vanaman/NCE, Board Vice President Craig Powers/Shrewsbury, Board President Lis Venetiou/The Pike School, Vivian Powers/Shrewsbury Middle School, Tim Brainerd/Wilson Natick, Ellen Eberly/Catholic Memorial, Board Treasurer Christina Manos/Sherwood Middle School, Board Clerk Yoshi Makishima/Milton Academy.
- III. MEETING MINUTES:
 - A. OPEN SESSION (9:00am-10:00am - All current and prospective MMSSL members welcome.)
 1. Establish norms: Pledging to be present and listen, taking care to not talk to each other, using "I perspective," making sure everyone is heard.
 2. Approve [Fall 2020 minutes](#). Kim: Move to approve.
 - a) Seconded by Tim.
 - b) All in favor.
 3. Board Election.
 - a) Lis: Slate or nominations needed?
 - (1) Kim: nomination probably only needed if someone is stepping down. Could probably move ahead with current candidates.
 - (2) Craig: Election effectively conducted by outgoing board, not membership at large; current board is already present.
 - (3) Lis: current Board members are not stepping down, and we are still in unusual circumstances due to COVID measures around the event (need to be flexible about policy, keep things simple, while considering what is best for league.)
 - (4) Kim: Non-Board members (Tim and Vivian) present okay with current Board continuing?
 - (a) Tim abstaining since Wilson has not paid dues (unofficially gives consent.)
 - (b) Vivian gives consent.
 - b) Craig: moves to re-elect current board.

(1) Motion passes.

4. Membership:

a) Outreach to current members. Checking in with members we didn't see this year?

(1) Lis: Goals are to welcome back previously-active members and encourage new schools.

(2) Kim: Will be easier to do once we have more info, and once principals have made decisions. Late August would be a good time for mass communications to be sent out.

(3) Lis: Possibility of a social, non-tournament event?

(4) Kim: Divide up outreach to specific schools?

(a) Christina: go into mailing list, send a "we missed you" message to currently non-active schools.

(b) Kim: Should be personal outreach; have Board members follow up with a phone call?

(c) Christina: could be possible to reach out to principals, share info for how to join.

(d) Lis: Should be two separate communications; a "welcome back" email to non-active coaches in early August, and direct outreach to principals in areas where we don't currently have members.

(i) Yoshi: will create template with key info for Board members to send out.

(a) Kim: Make sure to personalize language, make it specific to the team/coach we're reaching out to.

(ii) Lis: Create document for prospective outreach; copy and paste names from current mailing list?

(a) Christina: will work on creating base document for outreach.

(b) Kim: will add known former/prospectives to list.

(c) Yoshi: reminder to double-check Mailchimp for additional contacts.

(d) Lis: Needs to be two separate documents, one for inactive previous members, and one for "cold calls" to new schools.

(e) Tim: putting forward Noor Ali as a potential contact; also Kennedy Middle School, Framingham area (willing to do outreach to them.)

(f) Christina: Put category on list for assigned Board member; will work

with Kim to divvy up unassigned contacts.

5. Brief discussion on what worked and didn't work this year. Curious to hear if there were unexpected positive changes or outcomes from our virtual tournament (offer a virtual tournament each year when we are back to be in person?)
 - a) Kim: not spending money on transportation and other expenses were a definite positive. Technology limitations were challenging. Might be worthwhile to have a virtual option as a cost-saving measure, but concerned that our virtual meets this year had relatively low attendance.
 - (1) Vivian: was able to get more additional support from high schoolers. (Kim had the opposite experience.)
 - b) Vivian: Bus to Andover or Milton costs around \$800, school charges \$500 fee that does not go directly to the activity, donations needed for concession sales; costs of activity make an impact, though may not entirely prohibit any students from participating.
 - (1) Christina: At the student level, financial issues usually are not a problem (students encouraged to reach out to schools directly in case of hardship.) Logistics of tracking and collecting fees for expenses is complicated.
 - (2) Vivian: Virtual tournaments also lose benefit of students getting to meet students from other schools.
 - (3) Lis: Reminder, tournaments will need to be virtual likely through December; virtual tournament would only be offered as a one-off option during a normal, in-person year.
 - (a) Craig: Cost of running virtual tournaments is smaller, but not nonexistent. We were able to cover it this year, but still needs to be funded.
 - (b) Yoshi: Tabroom fees will also need to be accounted for next year.
 - c) Lis: We will need to charge for virtual tournaments next year.
 - (1) Kim: One event had schools mail a check to a point-person, do follow-up for those who didn't pay.
 - (2) Christina: Fee going to the MMSSL and not the host. Added layer of logistics, in terms of how to divide up money collected from tournaments.
 - (3) Vivian: Shrewsbury students all asked for a \$50 activities fee (covers participation in all activities), that does not go to the Speech Team.
 - (4) Kim: Requests one-time fee for entry for 6 tournaments up-front. Some students don't use all of it, but means that fees are taken care of for the rest of the year.
 - (a) Christina & Vivian will meet to figure out funding for transportation when it's needed for competition again.

- d) Anything didn't work?
 - (1) Kim: Campus doesn't offer any "Cafeteria"-type space for students to mingle. Possible to create one? (Will create a need for additional supervision of that space.)
 - (a) Craig: Additional Zoom meeting will need to be set up. Campus gets harder to use with more traffic.
 - (i) Christina: possible for there to be breakout rooms for different events?
 - (ii) Lis: would probably need a set time for a cross-team meetup, so supervision would be secured.
 - (a) Craig: Lunch would probably be ideal time, to replicate cafeteria setting.
 - (2) Need to spread tech burden out to other members besides Craig (was handling most troubleshooting and judge assignments.)
 - (a) Christina: is beneficial to have someone not in charge of a team able to manage tech side. Coaches are usually juggling team supervision.
 - (b) Kim: at this point, Board members can be delegated to do more "legwork."
 - (i) Craig:
 - (3) Lis: Staff in Judges' Lounge needs to avoid "Tab Room Talk" - anything that shouldn't be public to parents. There were times some things were said that were not appropriate to general conversation.

6. Ellen Eberly/Catholic Memorial present.

- a) Was able to run Speech academically and as an after school activity once a week; was not able to get enough student interest and adult support for tournaments this year. (Tournament length cited as being a deterrent to participation.)
 - (1) Would be great to have a pool of college students, or a general bank of judges available to hire...reliability might be an issue.
 - (a) Vivian: Shrewsbury was heavily reliant on high school help - most reliable source this year.
 - (b) Craig: NSDA points and/or community service hours might be an incentive for high school kids.
 - (c) Kim: General email gets sent to her high schoolers at the beginning of the year as outreach; also offers a donation to high school team. Support of middle school framed as fundraising opportunity for high school speech students.
 - (d) Ellen: CM students already making up a lot of community service points elsewhere; parent motivation is the big missing piece right now.

- (e) Lis: Pike policy is that students don't participate without parent support; would be difficult to coordinate support from local high school.
- (f) Craig: Tabroom does facilitate participation of hired judges.
- (g) Kim: Partnering judges (one does "morning shift," one does "afternoon shift") can help. Makes the commitment easier.
- (h) Christina: paying judges would be difficult for many schools.
 - (i) Yoshi: paid judges can still be unreliable; parent sponsored high schooler from Milton didn't show up.
 - (ii) Lis: precedent of paying judges at Pike, but would prefer not to continue that practice.

B. MMSSL Board Discussion (10:00am-12:00pm)

1. Treasurer's report

- a) Review of beginning-of-year vs. current balance.
- b) Christina: tracking budget was very simple this year; few transactions.
- c) Lis: Looking at budget, clear need to charge participating schools something for next year's tournaments.
- d) Kim: possible to do digital collection, to make things easier?
 - (1) Christina: paper trail needed for record-keeping.
- e) Lis: moves to approve Treasurer's report.
 - (1) Motion passes.

2. Re-examine our financial structure, do some research on what other Leagues are doing, figure out if we need to charge for League dues. ESPECIALLY in light of new Tabroom fees.

- a) Tabroom.com new fee structure impact on MMSSL tournaments
 - (1) Key info: The first 50 entries in a tournament will be free of charge; There will be a \$4 fee per every 5 entries beyond the first 50 (For example, a 100 entry tournament will cost \$40.)
 - (2) Craig: When we go back to in-person, bump up fee per entry by \$1, to cover additional Tabroom costs. Possible to make hosts responsible for up-front costs? (Due Thursday before meet.)
 - (a) Lis: Possible to have MMSSL front money, host school pays the MMSSL later.
 - (b) Christina: Credit card or ACH withdrawal?
 - (c) Craig: Either works.
 - (d) Lis: Will feel less burdensome for schools.
 - (e) Kim: may need to change when we're in-person?
 - (3) Craig: Do we want to charge for virtual meets?
 - (a) Ellen: charging tends to increase commitment to events. When students have to pay for something

they are more likely to follow through with participating.

- (b) Craig: Did not experience difficulty getting students to follow through.
- (c) Lis: Students will have more options this year; will need to secure loyalty.
 - (i) Craig: minimum cost on Tabroom will be around \$6 per event, even with only one student in the category.
 - (ii) Vivian: Make sure to keep whatever the fee is consistent.
 - (iii) Kim: possible to include Tabroom fees in grant for host schools? (Would be helpful for in-person costs like awards.)
 - (iv) Kim: Also, may be a good idea to keep entry fees low (\$5?), to encourage participation when in-person resumes; MMSSL pays the difference.
 - (a) Christina: MMSSL is a nonprofit; since we have fewer expenses, would be good to make use of what we have.
- (d) Lis: uncomfortable asking for payments for virtual tournaments next year. We can afford it, we need to encourage participation, and logistics of collecting money will be difficult during another virtual year.

3. Storytelling description (“own words” vs. verbatim from text)

- a) Kim: will be challenging to enforce policies around text use, and discouraging for students who struggle with memorization. Change language to “students are encouraged to use their own words”?
 - (1) Yoshi: Storytelling is not a writing event; possible for some students to benefit from writing/improv skills that the event isn’t designed to test?
 - (2) Craig: Nationals precedent is that the “retelling must be true to the original tale”; only standard is that students need to stay true to the spirit of the text.
 - (3) Lis: comfortable with differences from Nationals; less comfortable when it comes to some high school judges being unaware of different, and in some cases less harsh, standards.
 - (a) Craig: one case where a high school student was familiar with a text, determined that a student was performing verbatim and not “using their own words.”
 - (b) Kim: current rules use “own words” language.
 - (c) Lis: How to enforce?
 - (i) Kim: Onus is on coaches to make sure students’ performances follow rules.

- (ii) Craig: enforcement is usually luck-of-the-draw anyways. While we don't expect all judges can enforce rules
 - (d) Lis: benefit to changing rules? Who would benefit from a language change?
 - (i) Kim: has experienced difficulties with at least one student understanding what is being asked of them. Students who are hesitant to memorize might not want to participate.
 - (a) Yoshi: Storytelling does allow for use of a manuscript.
 - (ii) Ellen: as a judge, usually not evaluating material, mostly their reaction to the performance; might intimidate judges to
 - (iii) Lis: some students find the idea of having to "use their own words" intimidating.
 - (iv) Kim: proposal to change "can use their own words" to "may use their own words", as an option but not a requirement.
 - (v) Craig: memorization already not required for any events under current rules.
 - (vi) Christina: in judges' briefing, emphasize to judges that they are not evaluating material; any concerns should be taken to Tab, and not necessarily reflected in the feedback to students.
 - (a) Craig: In the inciting case, the student did take the question to Tabroom.
 - (vii) Christina: change language to "students are encouraged to use their own words."
 - (viii) Vivian: if Storytelling is going to use a script, it's redundant (could be Kiddie Lit or Prose.)
 - (ix) Ellen: Storytelling replaced "Creative Storytelling," which was essentially a solo version of Team Improv.
 - (e) Lis: "encouraged" seems to be the best language; allows for creative possibilities without making the event seem too similar to other offerings.
- (4) Craig: updated rules were not approved; will recirculate for approval.

4. Tournament Schedule:
 a) Initial Schedule:

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| October 24 | Pike Novice. Three rounds, no finals. Eighth grade students may judge. |
| November 14 | Milton Turkey Talk. Three rounds, no finals. Open to veteran and |

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| | novice competitors. |
| December 12 | MMSSL-sponsored meet. Three rounds plus finals. Open to veteran and novice competitors. |
| January 9 | Pike New Year Novice. Three rounds plus finals. Eighth grade students may judge. |
| January 23 | Shrewsbury. Three rounds plus finals. Open to veteran and novice competitors. Double entry allowed. |
| February 13 | MMSSL-sponsored meet. Three rounds plus finals. Open to veteran and novice competitors. Double entry allowed. |
| March 6 | Big Questions Debate Special. Three rounds plus finals. |
| April 3 or 10 | ??? |
| May 1 | Milton Foley. Three rounds plus finals. Open to veteran and novice competitors. Double entry allowed. Two Fling events offered. |
| May 15 (?) | Fully Fling |

- b) Lis: Encourage schools to participate in available high school opportunities, to fill gap in March?
- c) Do we want to offer a just BQ tournament (virtually?) separate from Fully Fling to keep the casual tone of the Fling and address the high need of judges and rooms for this event.
 - (1) Lis: make February 13th a Fling meet?
 - (2) Craig: may be best to keep it a virtual event.
 - (3) Christina: Move it to March, keep it virtual.
 - (a) Kim: Needham BQ will be offered; might be a conflict.
 - (b) Christina: Middle schoolers will probably not be encouraged to participate against high school students. Might be more likely to participate in a middle school-only event.
- d) Starting the year virtual with the possibility of transitioning to in person at some point.
 - (1) TBD.
- e) Bring back “Fully Fling” as a year-end event for 2021-2022? (timing so schools can come?) Consider Imp Storytelling addition? Try for 3 judges and how if only one round in April
 - (1) Christina: can’t be as late as it was this year; too difficult to get judges. (Seconded by Yoshi.)

5. Add more to the BQ information/instructions and put on our website for future use.

IV. 11:59am: Meeting adjourned by Board President.