**Massachusetts Middle School Speech League**

**Fall meeting: September 10, 2017**

1. Call to Order
   1. Spencer called the meeting to order at 9:44 a.m. at Al Hamra.
   2. Spencer thanked Al Hamra for hosting and announced that we needed to be done by noon.
2. Attendance
   1. The following Board Members were in attendance:
      1. Debbie Simon, Milton, President
      2. Craig Powers, Shrewsbury, VP
      3. Spencer Harvey, RJ Grey, Treasurer
      4. Lis Venetiou, Pike, Secretary
      5. Kim Vanaman, Newton, Board member
   2. MMSSL Members in attendance: NoorAli (Al Hamra), Vivian Powers (Shrewsbury), Ellen Eberly (Catholic Memorial), Kim Briand (Chelmsford), Tim Brainard (Wilson), Yoshi Makishima (Milton), Zen Ming (Chinese Weekend School, Hill Middle School in Andover), Asma Hameed (Al Hamra), Hannah Flint (Nashoba Brooks), Leigh Hutchinson, (Charles River School), Christina Manos (Shrewsbury).
3. Last meeting minutes: Spencer moved, Debbie seconded. Approved.
4. Welcome to Lis to take on Secretary duties. Don’t have a formal job description for secretary. The job entails:
   1. Keeping minutes
   2. Maintaining membership database, email and contact information
   3. League correspondence. Emails to league would come from Lis and not Spencer. Craig said that matches what’s in the league rules.
5. Spencer advised time limit for some topics on the agenda.
6. Treasurer’s report. Not printed.
   1. No transactions since spring meeting.
   2. Balance $527.81
   3. 2015 taxes, which he filed over a year ago, were accepted by the IRS as submitted.
   4. 2016 tax return submitted on August 1, 2017. Status is pending with the IRS.
   5. Sent invoices to a few people. Brought blank invoices. Dues are $50. If need invoice talk to Spencer.
   6. Debbie said thank you to Spencer since the financial aspect is new. Grateful for Spencer’s skill set.
   7. No objections. Motion by Craig. Tim seconded. Approved.
7. NSDA conference in Denver. Lis brief report.
   1. Debbie added NSDA is worthwhile joining for the resources they have on line. Caliber very high. Many webinars and instructional. Middle school professional coaches talking about the middle school level. Seen a real shift in this organization to embrace middle school with a connection with your kids to the high school. Look into becoming a member with a resource package. Not for copying but educational in terms of the level of excellence in this activity and in our league. Debbie sees real change in the organization. Putting education first. National Middle School tournament is in Florida this year. Recommend conference and joining league. An undercurrent of artistic plagiarism. Use it as inspiration not as copying verbatim. It is a national honor society with points.
   2. Kim said there’s a lot available at the $75 level. Good resources.
   3. Discussion of whether or not points are worthwhile. Creates a competitive level.
8. Changes to standard ballots:
   1. Refining, proofing, etc. Clean up. Ordering of information.
   2. Ellen question: when are the new ballots up? Now. In PDF.
   3. Please use the web site to pull new ones off.
   4. Debbie praised Kim’s level of detail. On ballots, we didn’t articulate kids can have support. Specify when it is required.
   5. Vivian has had judges downgrade kids because they didn’t have notes. Particularly OO and Dec.
   6. Need to train judges uniformly as best we can. The kids have also been downgraded with notes.
   7. Kim has said their memorization needs support. Had more than one video. The amount of information we tell judges is pages and pages of information. Evolved from the original idea of the big thing to a little thing.
   8. No objections to using upgraded ballots. Craig moved. Kim seconded.
9. Judges check list. So much information on that morning to parents, some of whom don’t know anything about speech. Include a checklist for each round. Put check list on back of dance card. Save time and paper.
   1. Kim will put it on line as a resource. Step by step.
   2. Ellen problem at the last minute at a tournament. We send it out to our own parents ahead of time.
   3. Master that Kim makes will have four boxes to check. Keep the same piece of paper throughout tournament.
   4. Christina. We can direct the parents to the web site so they can bookmark it.
   5. Spencer moved to have judges’ checklist be a tool available on the web site. We’ll try it out and see how it works. 8-10 bullets. Less than one page. Passed.
10. Fling ballots on web site.
11. Formatted ballots will go under resources on the web site because they are optional. Shouldn’t happen until after January 1 for the same reason that we don’t double enter. Kim has party classes where they play speech games to make it as fun as possible. Some of the things are fling events. Not there yet. 8 of them. Video has been the focus, priority. Timeline? At least halfway done.
12. Status of League rules:
    1. Thank you to Craig. Give the league independent existence.
    2. Craig emailed the draft to the committee that was established. Sent it out at the beginning of the summer and didn’t get comments back. He’s done editing. Still needs input.
    3. Biggest question is exactly what eligibility we want in regard to anything other than established middle schools and charter schools and out of state schools. In the past we’ve had guest participation from out of state schools. Reasonable to have it on a tournament by tournament basis. High School has full allowance for state league.
    4. Current verbiage come as a guest status sponsored by an existing member’s school. Invited to participate in that school’s tournament.
    5. Debbie said that we’ve had very few guests in the middle school and they come when they were invited.
    6. More home school kids these days. Bristol county where they have an association of parents with home schools. What if they want to do speech?
    7. Home school organization so get the home school on line so a student was sponsored by Stanford on Line. Have to be sponsored by organization/school. Need to fill out same card that Spencer sends out. They have someone beyond their organization that is sponsoring them.
    8. Spencer suggests 10 minutes of questions from Craig. Send out to entire league and shoot for approval during spring meeting. To 10:45.
       1. Membership
       2. Rules on grants and scholarships: When Debbie was on the HS board they had a lot of money. Not put anything in right now unless we build more money down the road. We as a league are evolving, young, growing.
       3. HS has rules on voting a point of confusion of one vote one school align with the powers in the board of directors. The by-laws vest decision making power in the board (exclusively). We functionally act as if the entire group is voting capable. In the high school have rules on voting that pre-date the league. Do need to move quickly at times and have the board vote. Can be at their discretion. When the board puts it to the entire membership then this is how it happens.
       4. Rules of professionalism and personal conduct. HS allows violation of rules of conduct to be in disqualification at the judgement of the tournament director then competes with board. We don’t have a set committee. Ad hoc committee. Like the language because there’s always a chance that the tournament director may not be impartial. Wording: “board may create a committee to handle complaint…” Layer of protection to have a committee for the tournament director. What if two members of the board are not there? Include language if in attendance. 5 people are on the board of directors. All six of them will be there.
       5. Students shall respect property and facilities. Additional rule specifying where they shouldn’t go. First rule ought to be sufficient. Tournament directors are requested to where students can be allowed. Protection for if something is broken. School’s responsible for the safety of host school.
       6. If it’s a drama then it’s not free verse poetry.
       7. Published sources for interpretive events: available to all members of the league, able to produce reference, readily available to purchase or view. Based on text form. That’s where youtube becomes tricky. Discussion on youtube. D thinks we’re moving in that direction. Slam poetry that’s the only way it’s published. Wave of the future. People are not putting things in print but in those kinds of medium. What’s the spirit of kids transcribing material? High schools are linked more closely to the national organizations. Kids POV level playing field then the “readily accessible” is the point. Other side is how to enforce rules or they don’t mean anything. Creditable. Don’t want to overload them with rules.
    9. Since the mid 80s when we started this league we have been focused on middle school and encouragement. Have been very free. Kept golden rule of readily accessible.
    10. Our kids compete at a high school level tournament and have to compete to those rules. Effectively responsibility of coach and NSDA.
    11. Consensus with language coaches’ responsible. Could be something that’s viewed knowing that if you’re going to take your students to the high school you may have challenges.
    12. Take a look at it in the spring meeting.
    13. Become familiar with rules to make us consistent and strong.
    14. Requirement is reference can be produced. Not necessarily the source itself.
    15. Youtube videos have to be public access not ones that friends have shared.
    16. What does this mean for declamation because it opens up any speech that has ever been given—a high school speech down the road that a parent videotapes are open.
13. Calendar of events: posted on web site. Final calendar?
    1. Snow dates in the minutes but not on the web site.
    2. Definition of novice. Did the fling as a 5th grader disqualify them? Novice means they never did compete. Kids do not have to be great at their first tournament. Doing trophy if they get one of judges get one. Veteran speechies can judge. Don’t put any students in there that are not a high ordered feature. 6th grade and up. Gap in March. Opportunity to take students to one of the high school tournaments. Note differences in high school rules. Can do a 5th grade foray in the spring. Craig moved to accept. 2nd by Tim. Passed.
14. Items 7 & 8 of agenda. Debbie.
    1. Resource material for middle schoolers—we don’t have a lot. Set a personal goal for the league. Ask each coach who has been here for a while to submit one lesson plan or one guide to help a coach in an event. You have until June and not a requirement. But would be nice to click resource section of web site to have real resources. A good book to read or lesson plan that worked, coaching techniques. More than just the balance in the resource. Will have coaching session again and would like to do moving forward.
15. Judges instructional video their idea would have been 3+ hours. No one would take that in. First of a series of needs from the league that we move forward. Had a DVD filmed version of speeches.
    1. 40-minute video that introduces each event to the judge. 2 minutes per speech then followed ballot, critiqued then wrote it up on ballot then post it to the web site as sample ballots. Sample ballot to be used alongside video. Had to edit twice. On the last edit. Email the link. Post it on the web site.
    2. Allowed 20 hard copy DVDs. Copyright risk to post it on our web site. Debbie has to talk to Evan. Will email link to us. In time for judges training. Risk of putting it on web site is worth it. The kids are doing material is copyrighted. Tried to protect students’ anonymity with fake names on sample ballots and alphabetical list at credits.
    3. Debbie or Kim talked about event including skills, then had student performance, then critiqued. Spectacular! Coaches want to share with the students as well as parent judges.
16. Logo contest for the league.
    1. Debbie nice to have something and we have a lot of kids with talents. Help Debbie set up the rules and make final date be the fling date.
    2. Do we have a mission statement? That should be a part of this process.
    3. Spencer to help with the rules of the contest. Use the logo and type out---it must contain the words MMSSL. One-inch square—look good small or big. Artwork becomes the property of MMSSL. Should be color and black and white.
    4. Spencer, Debbie, Christina on the committee for the logo contest. Announce contest at Ellen’s tournament and narrow down to finalists. Each school vote on their favorite.
17. Debbie aid to Houston area schools. Our thoughts to schools in Houston, Florida, the West, Mexico. Speech organizations organizing in Houston. Extenuating help in Katrina.
    1. Coach at Haddesberg—Debbie will forward email. NCFL discussing organizing. Compiling list of schools looking for assistance. Sent duplicate books to restart speech library. Debbie on behalf of our league will write back to how we can sponsor a middle school and support them. Maybe pay their dues or materials fee. What’s a maximum amount that we’re willing to spend. Forensic for all.
    2. Spencer: To be fiscally responsible contribute up to $250.00. Humanity is more important than the amount.
    3. Massachusetts is on board and would like to pair up with a middle school in the district.
    4. Motion to have the league donate up to $300 escrow purpose of donating to hurricane affected to middle schools’ speech organizations $150 one in Houston one in Florida. Spencer motioned. Kim seconded. Passed.
18. We need pictures for the web site. Send them to Craig okay to be able to have these pictures in public. Need releases from students. Make our site not look like an all boys club.
    1. Need a photo release from parents.
    2. Data card include the release?
19. Meeting adjourned 12:03 Spencer, Tim seconded.