# Massachusetts Middle School Speech League

# Meeting Minutes

September 10, 2016

1. Call to order

**Spencer Harvey** called the meeting of the **Massachusetts Middle School Speech League** to order at **9:30 am** on **September 10, 2016** in **Room 213 Ware Hall at Milton Academy**.

1. Attendance

The following directors were in attendance:

* Deborah Simon, Milton Academy, President
* Craig Powers, Vice President
* Spencer Harvey, R.J. Grey (Acton-Boxboro), Treasurer
* Kim Vanaman, Brown and Oak Hill (Newton), Clerk

In addition, the following league coaches were in attendance: Ellen Eberly (Catholic Memorial), Dan Sapir (Sacred Heart), Lis Venetiou (Pike), Michelle Boyle (JCDS), Leigh Hutchinson (Charles River), Vivian Powers (Shrewsbury Oak), and Tim Brainerd (Natick Wilson)

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the May 14, 2016 meeting were approved as amended.

1. Treasurer’s Report

Spencer Harvey gave the treasurer’s report. The checking account balance of $374.51 was unchanged from the previous meeting. There were no outstanding obligations, debts, or liabilities. A Form 990N tax return was submitted to the IRS for FY 2015 as submission ID 10065520162220435162. Spencer planned to coordinate with Craig Powers to get Craig as a co-signer on the league bank account.

Spencer expected to collect approximately $850 in dues in the upcoming season, and asked if there was anything needed for purchase. Spencer wondered if there was any interest in pre-printing ballots in bulk. Ellen Eberly expressed concern with how the host schools would collect ballots prior to the tournament. Vivian Powers, Ellen, and Leigh Hutchinson all get their ballots for free from their schools. Leigh also expressed concern that there might be a desire to make changes in the ballots, which had been redesigned for this meeting and would be discussed later. Kim Vanaman inquired about whether the league should standardize on paper colors for ballots; Vivian objected, because she does not always have the same colors available. Spencer suggested allowing tournaments to submit printing expenses to the league for reimbursement.

Kim inquired about whether it would make sense to order prizes in bulk. Vivian and Ellen said that they prefer to get their own prizes. Leigh Hutchinson said that she would like the opportunity. Kim said that she prefers to do her own prizes for the Spring Fling tournament, but thought it might be worth considering for the league. Debbie suggested getting honorable mention awards in bulk. Spencer asked if Craig knew how many honorable mentions were awarded in the 2015-2016 season; Craig guessed the number would be around 15 to 25 per tournament. Debbie volunteered to obtain pricing for 200 honorable mention awards.

1. Scheduled Business
2. Dues Policy: Spencer Harvey requested a discussion of dues policy in regard to single teams comprising students from multiple schools. Debbie Simon noted that the issue had been raised with the NSDA, which decided to levy dues by school rather than by club. When Debbie inquired about it, she was told that the NSDA preferred that approach for reasons of security, safety, and responsibility. Kim Vanaman asked for consideration of the size of the team. Spencer expressed his opinion that the reason for league dues is to provide operating funds for the league. He is concerned about situations where multiple schools might band together on a club basis to reduce liability. His preference, to address this possibility and to ensure uniformity of policy, is to levy league dues by school. Tim Brainerd asked about the possibility of levying $50 dues by team, with an added fee for extra schools. Debbie suggested that in cases of very small contributions from a school, then the team should apply to the league for a dues waiver.

Ellen Eberly pointed to legal issues, where any major issues at a tournament would go back to the school. Dan Sapir asked about CORI issues, whether the adults associated with schools have gone through a CORI check. Vivian Powers noted that she had been told that all judges should also go through a CORI check. Spencer suggested asking the league’s counsel about liability.

**Spencer Harvey moved that league dues are levied per school, and that coaches may apply in writing to the league for a waiver, which would be effective immediately upon approval. The motion was approved by a voice vote.**

1. New Ballots: Debbie Simon presented the proposed new ballots for competitions in the 2016-2017 school year. She called attention to the current high school league ballots, which were designed to simplify from previous versions and make more space for comments. The proposed MMSSL league ballots were designed to provide more guidance: because parents were having trouble transferring from informational handouts to ballots, more explicit judging criteria are given on the ballots. The rubrics were changed to be more direct, and the ballot includes a specific direction to include both a positive and a negative comment. Debbie also called attention to the rules details, asking that they be reviewed thoroughly. Of particular note, Demonstration requires the use of a visual aid, and Storytelling no longer identifies a theme.

Spencer Harvey asked for a review of the changes that had been requested in the spring.

* Language on Impromptu to require a continuous linkage with the topic: Following discussion, it was agreed to add, “Students must adhere to the selected prompt” to the summary.
* Additional ranks: Done.
* Clarification on prop usage in Demonstration: Done.
* Source material and manuscript usage in Dramatic Performance: Debbie asked to change “scene” to “storyline”.
* Manuscript requirement in Prose: Done.

Spencer inquired about the use of the words “response ballot”; Kim Vanaman replied that it was intended as a subtle hint to subconsciously motivate the judge to provide feedback. Dan Sapir suggested clarifying that introductory material may follow a teaser; it was agreed add “at some point” on the introduction for all events where an introduction is applicable. Kim noted that when judges are filling out ballots, the rubric will be the last thing they fill out, so she wondered if the rubric should be at the bottom with space for comments above it. Craig expressed concern that then judges might not look at the rubric before writing their comments, so the intended use for comment vocabulary might be lost. Kim suggested adding, “Use this space for additional observations while students are speaking.” Craig identified two additional minor fixes.

**Tim Brainerd moved that the ballots be accepted as amended. The motion was approved by a voice vote.**

1. Tournament Schedule: The schedule that was agreed upon was:
* Sunday, October 3: Catholic Memorial, novice tournament, no finals, varsity competitors may judge
* Sunday, November 20: Wilson, with finals OR screening of “Figures of Speech”
* Sunday, December 11: RJ Grey, with finals (12/18 snow date)
* Sunday, January 8: Nashoba Brooks, novice tournament, with finals
* Sunday, January 22: Shrewsbury, double entry allowed, with finals (1/29 snow date)
* Sunday, February 5: Sacred Heart, no finals
* Sunday, March 5: Pike, double entry allowed, with finals
* Saturday, April 1: Brown/Oak Hill, double entry allowed, bonus round of fling events prior to finals, with finals
* Sunday, May 7: Milton Academy, double entry allowed, two bonus events in regular competition rounds, with finals

Debbie Simon emphasized that accurate entry in Tabroom is important. Vivian Powers noted that she requires an entry form from all of her students so that she has the details in front of her when she inputs her entry into Tabroom.

**Spencer Harvey moved that the tournament schedule be accepted as finally written. The motion was approved by a voice vote.**

1. Video training aids: Debbie Simon began a discussion about the possibility of producing a video training aid for judges. Debbie suggested hiring a videographer to film students in each event. Coaches would provide event descriptions, instructions on what judges should look for, and critiques of the student performance. There was some discussion of the logistics of the work. Spencer Harvey noted that a quote from a videographer would be needed. The consensus of the meeting attendees was that Debbie should continue to work on this.
2. Possible movie screening at a tournament: Two of Debbie Simon’s former students produced a documentary film entitled “Figures of Speech,” which tracked duos from local through national tournaments. They have offered to screen the movie for the league. Tim Brainerd agreed to substitute the movie for finals at his tournament.
3. Other Business
	* 1. League rules: Spencer Harvey expressed concern about material that used to be in league rules but which was omitted from the bylaws. Craig Powers volunteered to work on proposed amendments to the bylaws.
		2. Team membership: Vivian Powers noted that she requires team members’ parents to sign a sheet acknowledging membership within the team, and thought that other teams might want to consider this. Tim Brainerd asked for a copy of the form, in either hard copy or digital form.
		3. Storytelling theme: Lis Venetiou asked whether there would be a theme for the storytelling event. The answer was that there would not be a theme.
		4. Tabroom: There was a question about whether the league would continue to use Tabroom.com to run tournaments. The answer was that it would continue to use Tabroom.com.
4. Adjournment

**Spencer Harvey** adjourned the meeting at **12:09 pm**.

Minutes submitted by: Craig Powers

Minutes approved by: