# Massachusetts Middle School Speech League

# Meeting Minutes

June 4, 2017

1. Call to order

**Spencer Harvey** called the meeting of the **Massachusetts Middle School Speech League** to order at **10:00 am** on **June 4, 2017** 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 and representatives were in attendance: Dan Sapir (Sacred Heart), Lis Venetiou (Pike), Michelle Boyle (JCDS), Vivian Powers (Shrewsbury Oak), Christina Manos (Shrewsbury Sherwood), Alex Helm (Nashoba Brooks), Nadia Amrani (Al Hamra), and Yoshi Makishima (Milton Academy)

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the September 10, 2016 meeting were approved as amended.

1. Treasurer’s Report

Spencer Harvey gave the treasurer’s report. The checking account balance as of the previous meeting was $374.51; all activity through the year led to a final balance of $527.81. There was some discussion of teams that paid league dues but did not attend tournaments. Nadia asked if Al Hamra had paid dues; Spencer thought they had paid prior to September 26. Concern was expressed about the Fessenden School attending a tournament without paying league dues. **Craig Powers moved that the dues for the Fessenden School for the 2016-2017 school year be waived. The motion was approved by a voice vote.** Kim Vanaman said that she would contact the school to clarify dues policy going forward. The Treasurer’s Report was approved as submitted.

1. Scheduled Business
2. Data Card: **Spencer Harvey moved that the school data card form be modified to add a contact e-mail address. The motion was approved by a voice vote.**
3. Video Update: Kim Vanaman and Debbie Simon gave an update on the training video project. They asked that any suggestions for specific directions for events be e-mailed to Kim and Debbie for inclusion in the video script. Debbie asked if the group would object to Debbie and Kim developing the video script from the event ballots; the consensus was in favor. Some discussion followed about specific concerns arising from judging during events in the past year. Christina Manos raised a concern about judging comments relating to memorization in reading categories, and she thought that judges were also confused about the optional memorization in non-binder categories. Kim suggested adding use of the binder or script as a rubric item for the reading categories. Debbie noted that the performances on video for the optional memorization categories were all memorized, so there are no examples of performances using a script. She also was concerned about judge confusion as to categories where movement is appropriate and categories where it is not. Lis raised some ballot issues from the final tournament; Debbie reminded the group that each school has a responsibility to train their judges, and suggested sending a reminder message to that effect in the fall. She also noted that the high school league has more information and resources on their website, and suggested that this league may want to follow their lead. Craig Powers suggested that it might be helpful to have some sample filled-out ballots for the website. **Spencer moved that the league express confidence in Debbie and Kim to successfully complete the video project. The motion was approved by a voice vote.**
4. Tournament Schedule: Before discussing the details of the schedule, there was a general discussion of the process of setting the schedule. Debbie Simon noted that there is no firm policy, but in general, a school that has a date is allowed to keep it until they no longer want it. Debbie suggested that if any changes were to be made to this policy, then it should be brought to a vote. Lis Venetiou observed that the 2016-2017 schedule was nicely spaced when it was originally set, but the two week separation between the Foley and the rescheduled Spring Fling was exhausting. She also indicated that she would not want another March date because of the competition with the two high school tournaments that accept middle school competitors (Shrewsbury’s Mardi Gras and Needham’s March Merryness). Debbie asked that for snow dates, postponements or cancellations should be decided at least two days in advance. Spencer Harvey asked if something to that effect could be added to the league rules; Craig Powers agreed.

After some discussion, the schedule was tentatively set to the following:

Sunday, October 29: Catholic Memorial novice tournament, three rounds, no finals, varsity students may judge

Sunday, November 19: Milton Academy Turkey Fest, three rounds, no finals

Sunday, December 10: RJ Grey, three rounds, finals (December 17 snow date)

Sunday, January 7: Nashoba Brooks novice, three rounds, no finals, varsity students may judge

Sunday, January 21: Shrewsbury, double entry, three rounds, finals (January 28 snow date)

Sunday, February 4: Pike, double entry, three rounds, finals (February 11 snow date)

Saturday, April 7: Brown/Oak Hill Spring Fling, double entry, three rounds, finals, bonus pre-finals round of fling events

Sunday, May 6: Milton Academy Foley Fiesta, double entry, three rounds, finals, two bonus events

There was a discussion about the choice of bonus events. Kim Vanaman spoke in favor of Team Improv and Original Literature, as both categories require some preparation and it doesn’t seem right to only have them at the Fling.

Kim asked about Saturday vs. Sunday events. Spencer, Lis, and Christina all noted issues with their students for Saturday tournaments.

Nadia wondered if it would be possible for Al Hamra to host a tournament. Because of the small size of the school (ten rooms), the consensus was that it would be too small to host a tournament. Christina offered to try to set up an informal meet between Sherwood and Al Hamra.

1. Discussion Items:

* **Size of the Board of Directors:** Craig Powers asked if the board should expand in size, in the interest of setting up offsetting terms to improve continuity and to have an odd number of members. **Craig Powers moved to increase the size of the board of directors from four to five, with the additional member an at-large member. The motion was approved by a voice vote. Craig Powers moved to accept Kim Vanaman’s resignation from the position of the Clerk/Secretary, with Kim assuming the open at-large board position, and the open Clerk/Secretary position to be published seeking interested representatives from league members, with nominations to be directed to the league president and to be received no later than September 1, 2017. The motion was approved by a voice vote.** Spencer Harvey distributed a proposed outline of the duties of the league secretary. Debbie Simon agreed to send out the notice of the open position.
* **Participation by 5th graders:** Kim Vanaman occasionally has fifth grade students on her team, and tries to include an event for them in the Spring Fling tournament. The past two years, there have only been one or two students registered. Kim asked if she should continue to try to incorporate fifth grade students; how many schools had fifth grade participation? Craig Powers noted that Wilson has registered a fifth grader in the past. Christina Manos said that Sherwood has fifth grade, but due to the quantity of interested sixth grade students, she does not accept fifth graders.
* **Bathroom gender info:** Lis Venetiou noted that transgender students feel awkward and uncomfortable going into bathrooms. After learning that this was an issue for them, she has looked for unisex/faculty bathrooms at tournaments. She asked that each tournament identify a suitable restroom and list the location in the tournament invitation. Kim Vanaman suggested putting together a checklist for things to do when hosting a tournament. Nadia asked about students looking for a place to pray in classrooms, and wondered if that would be in the same category; the consensus was that it would be.
* **Dual meets on weekday afternoons:** Leigh Hutchinson (Charles River School) is interested in a small competition, perhaps two rounds in three or four different events, with schools that are nearby. Craig Powers suggested that it might be better to do something like this as a private arrangement between the teams, rather than a sponsored league event.
* **League meetings on weekday afternoons:** Craig Powers was opposed, as is not in education and is working on afternoons. Christina Manos was opposed due to concerns with length of travel and traffic.
* **Summer workshops for coaches:** Debbie Simon recognized the public speaking courses that Kim Vanaman offers. Debbie suggested putting together a workshop for coaches to assist in coaching better. After some discussion, it was agreed to put on a workshop on June 28 from 10 am to 3 pm. Spencer Harvey asked if it would be possible for high school coaches to attend; Debbie said that it would be fine.

1. League Rules: Spencer Harvey asked for input and interest in development of league rules. Dan Sapir asked about the discrepancy in impromptu time limit with the high school league; Debbie Simon prefers the current length for consistency with the other events, and thought that the high school league should increase their length to either seven minutes or eight minutes. **Spencer moved that a rules committee be created, charged with drafting league rules suitable for approval at the fall meeting, to be chaired by Craig Powers with additional members Vivian Powers, Christina Manos, and Lis Venetiou. The motion was approved by a voice vote.** Craig asked for the sense of the league in regard to legality of verse drama in Free Verse / Poetry. Debbie suggested that the Library of Congress designation be considered; Kim Vanaman suggested that the author’s intent is important. Debbie noted that she would like to encourage internet sourcing, including YouTube, especially in the case of poetry. She likes the NCFL rule requiring that the source be “readily accessible to all” and encouraged the committee to consider that statement.
2. Set Place and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting was set to be hosted at Al Hamra, 435 South St Shrewsbury, on September 10th at 10 am.

1. Adjournment

**Spencer Harvey** adjourned the meeting at **12:55 pm**.

Minutes submitted by: Craig Powers

Minutes approved by: