

Greater Richmond Aquatic League

Annual Board of Directors Meeting

September 17, 2023, at Burkwood

Next Board Meeting Monday January 8th, 2024 at 7pm via Zoom

The Greater Richmond Aquatic League (GRAL) is an organization of swimmers, coaches, and parents whose aim is to promote and participate in the sport of summer swimming. GRAL provides an opportunity for young people to compete against others of similar ability in an atmosphere of fair play, good sportsmanship, and safety.

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm

Roll Call:

- Present: AshCreek, Ashland, Atlee, Battlefield Green, Bell Creek, Burkwood, Canterbury, Chestnut Oaks, Church Run, Colonies, Federal Club, Fox Hall, Goochland, Hanover, Kings Charter, Mechanicsville, Milestone, Old Church, Pebble Creek, Raintree, Rockville Dolphin Club, Tuckahoe Village West, Wellesley, Wembly, Wyndham
- Absent: Dominion Club, Hungary Creek, Twin Hickory

President Report: Kristin Brittle (Atlee) president@gralva.com

- Throughout this meeting we will be sharing suggestions that we have received from teams or individual families. We will not be voting on any changes tonight. Please engage in discussion about the various suggestions and please review the ideas with your team to determine your teams' feelings in preparation of a potential vote in January. It is up to you as Board members (not Exec Board) to bring up items for a vote.
- Thank you for a wonderful 2023 season! The weather threw us a few curveballs and likely a record cold meet during week two. Team leaders of hosting teams figured out how to make it work and visiting teams did an excellent job of providing extra support. Thank you for your support of the Exec Board and leadership at your individual pools. Please pass along my gratitude to all the leaders at your pools.
- Exemptions: They are not just asking permission, they are also a communication tool for parent reps, refs, and coaches. Our goal with exemptions is to provide a safe, fair, and comfortable meet experience for swimmers that might need an exemption. Please keep this in mind as you consider submitting exemptions and please make sure that meet referees are aware of exemptions. These exemptions are not to be questioned or challenged on deck. The S&T judge fills out a DQ card as usual, and then the ref will throw it out if is related to an

exemption. Questions can be sent to the league leaders but should not be discussed on deck at a meet.

- 2024 schedule: As a league, we voted to move the schedule up by a week because schools are getting out earlier and starting earlier. Cold water might be more of a factor if teams choose to start practice a week early. There are no GRAL rules about when a team starts practicing or with regards to air or water temperature. Those decisions are made by the individual teams.
- Bylaws require the schedule to be posted by February, but there have been requests for it earlier. Therefore, this year it will be posted on the website by October 1st.
- During the off season the Exec Board is committed to transitioning 4 Exec Board members into their new roles, updating the scholarship application process, and clarifying the roles within teams, specifically officials' coordinator. Furthermore, we will determine how to incorporate the use of Time Drops into the bylaws. Christy will be completing a GRAL guide to using Time Drops for the 2024 season. If you are interested in using Time Drops in next summer, please email President@gralva.com by January 5, 2024. The Exec Board will review the requests and make decisions regarding expansion.
- We have been asked as a Board to review the current "Sandbag" rule. It determines a swimmer's eligibility at the Champs meet for which events each swimmer can compete. Ten and under swimmers have 6 events in which they can qualify for Champs. If 4 or more of those events are SV, the swimmer may only swim those SV events. The same is true if the swimmer has 4 or more V (or higher) events, then he or she may not swim the JV qualified events. For older swimmers, there are 9 events in which swimmers can qualify. If a swimmer has 6 SV times, then they can't swim anything except SV events (and so forth with V and JV events).
 - Sandbag rule came about approximately 30 years ago because Champs was becoming a joke. Kids were purposefully swimming slow in the season to stay in JV and then getting to Champs and blowing the competition out of the water.
 - This year we had 951 Champs qualifiers, and 95 of them were impacted by the Sandbag rule (they had less options of events to choose from). Kristin spoke with 5 Head Coaches about this rule at Champs. All 5 would like to see the rule changed or eliminated.
 - At this point, there are 4 choices:
 1. Leave the rule alone and don't change it
 2. Eliminate the rule completely.
 3. As suggested by a couple coaches, don't include Champs times from the previous year as determination for sandbagging rule because it's often the fastest time a swimmer has.
 4. "Swimmer preference" is the suggested change right now. It would allow the swimmer to "swim up." For example: a swimmer qualifies for Champs with four SV times and one V time. According to the current rule, the swimmer is not allowed to swim the V event at all. If we change the rule, the swimmer would be allowed to swim the V

event but in the SV category. It will follow the spirit of the law and allow swimmers to swim their most loved events while still keeping fairness across the board.

- Please review this rule with your Coaches to be prepared for a vote if it comes up in January. If your team comes up with another suggestion, please bring it to the meeting in January
- July meeting minutes: Bell Creek motion to approve, Kings Charter second, unanimously approved into the record.

Secretary Report: Julie Zubris (Rockville) secretary@gralva.com

- Any Board rep changes for the new year can be sent to the secretary.

Treasurer Report: Debi Knott (Wembly) treasurer@gralva.com

- Started the season with approximately \$27k in bank, we currently have about \$60k. However, we still need to make quite a few payments.
- We need to pay SwimRVA for Champs, pay for heat sheets, need to pay Christy her yearly salary, as well as Christy's expenses.
- In January we will have a final numbers for the 2023 year.
- New budget for 2024 will be voted on in February; will be sent out via email before that meeting for review.

VP of Officials Report: Roy Sabo (Milestone) officials@gralva.com

- Feedback was that training was better this year, but execution left much to be desired. S&T were not making enough calls in regular season, and it became obvious as Champs. Quality and consistent refereeing was a real problem.
- New S&T trainings will continue to be in person.
- New Ref trainings will be in person next year, with a strong suggestion that any refs who were trained in 2020 or later also attend an in person training.
- Ref roundtable format will change a little bit to overcome some of the issues that are happening.
- Next year will plan to hold one training after the season starts, but it will not be an additional training, we will just shift dates.
- Officials Coordinator: should be a position with each team that actually coordinates the officials (who is working, which half, who is shadowing and who is being shadowed), ensures that new officials are properly trained according to GRAL rules (for example 3rd walk is when new S&T is with an experienced S&T judge watching the trainee actually making the calls). Suggestion to require new S&T judges to walk with only an experienced S&T judge (an S&T minimum of 8 halves). That is best practice, is ideal, and is what officials coordinators should be striving to do. However, sometimes that is not possible and it is better for training to happen rather than not happen at all.

Computer/Webmaster Report: Christy Evanko webmaster@gralva.com and christy@gralva.com

- Christy absent, no report.

VP of Equipment Report: Nathan Mondragon (Goochland) equipment@gralva.com

- Handed out left over medals from Champs.
- Look at your starters, if you need to order a new one, do it now. It was previously about 6 months lead time. If your team is having an issue with the starter, try replacing the battery first (about \$100) whereas a new starter is about \$1000.

VP of Champs Report: Allison Unowitz (Tuckahoe Village West) champs@gralva.com.

- Successful Champs this year, went smooth overall. There were 951 qualifiers, (up 4% from year before), and 879 were entered in events.
- We Still need a VP of Champs,
- Champs is locked in for next two years at Swim RVA
 - 2024: Sat/Sun July 20, 21
 - 2025: Sat/Sun July 19, 20
- T-shirts and lanyards are on the table if anyone wants them for no charge
- Time standards changed in 2023 and will stay in place for 2024. They are typically modified every two years.
- Champs will be swum in yards in both 2024 and 2025. We are off cycle but are trying to get back on the cycle to have one year of yards and one year of meters in each time standard cycle.

Old Business:

- None

New Business

- 2024 Exec Board
 - New President- Julie Zubris (RVDC): GRAL secretary for 4 years. Chestnut Oak motion to approve, Fox Hall second, unanimous vote to approve.
 - Past President- Kristin Brittle: no vote required
 - New Secretary- Michelle Shores (Battlefield Green): Her kids have been swimming with GRAL for 7 years, she is an official with the team. Federal Club motion to approve, Bell Creek second, unanimous vote to approve.
 - New Treasurer- Cynthia Anderson (Raintree): Has two kids swimming with Raintree since 2017, and is a computer rep there. Motion to approve by Federal Club, Fox Hall second, unanimous vote to approve.
 - Returning VP of Officials- Roy Sabo through 2024 (Milestone)
 - New VP of Equipment- Moira Sweazey (Hanover CC): One kid swimming for 6 years, she herself was a swimmer with GRAL back in the 80s. Federal Club motion to approve, Hanover second, unanimous vote to approve.
 - VP of Champs- Open, no one is willing, take it to your teams because we need someone to step up.
- 2024 GRAL Meeting dates (tentative plan—dates likely to stick, but in person/virtual may change)
 - Monday, January 8th (2nd Monday because of NYD, virtual)
 - Monday, February 5th (in-person because we collect dues)

- Monday, March 4th (virtual)
- Monday, April 8th (2nd Monday because of spring break, virtual)
- Monday, May 6th (in-person)
- Monday, June 3rd (in-person)
- Monday, July 1st (in-person)
- 2024 Meet Dates (schedule will be posted on website by October 1st)
 - Meet 1 = Wednesday, June 5th (no longer flexibility with meet 1 scheduling)
 - Meet 2 = Wednesday, June 12th
 - Meet 3 = Wednesday, June 19th
 - Meet 4 = Wednesday, June 26th
 - Meet 5 = consider Tuesday the 2nd because of the holiday (may be the 2nd or 3rd, but have a rain plan if the 3rd is rained out). Meet must be completed by Saturday night
 - Meet 6 = Tuesday, July 9th (must be on Tuesday because of the tight timeline for Champs)
 - Champs = Saturday, July 20th and Sunday, July 21st
- 2024 GRAL Divisions- calculation determination is laid out in the handbook. We need two divisions of 6 and two of 8. Using the standard deviation, find the most natural (and competitive) breaks for those divisions.
 - Division 1: Burkwood, Church Run, Ashland, Hungary Creek, Colonies, Raintree, Canterbury, Wyndham
 - Division 2: Twin Hickory, Kings Charter, Fox Hall, AshCreek, Goochland, Rocvkillie Dolphin Club
 - Division 3: Dominion Club, Atlee, Milestone, Chestnut Oaks, Federal Club, Wellesley
 - Division 4: Pebble Creek, Old Church, Bell Creek, Tuckahoe Village West, Hanover Country Club, Wembly, Battlefield Green, Mechanicsville.

Good of the league

- As past president, Kristin plans to look at why we are losing swimmers from the league.
 - Colonies sees a concern at age 9 with kids having to make the jump to 50s, and then a lot of developmental things happening with kids ages 9-11. By the time they are 14, if those kids had stayed, that's when they end up leaving.
 - Possibly create a survey with multiple choice/true/false to be sent to all families but needs to be simple enough to collect data from 3100 families.
 - We should be asking teams that are growing what they are doing (best practices).
 - We need to educate potential new families that swim team isn't totally overwhelming, but that it does require parents to volunteer. Recruitment seems to be more of a problem with parents not wanting to do it rather than children.
- Concern from Church Run that they are always hosting the same teams and going to the same teams as away. Church Run does not want to go to Canterbury again. Kristin stated that there is no way for GRAL to take requests for meets, either specific teams to swim against or specific locations. Meet schedule are based on an

algorithm. If there is an issue, two teams may decide between themselves to switch locations, but the league cannot then make other changes to the schedule to ensure each team has 3 away and 3 home meets. However, issues between pools are issues between pools; they are not related to the league as a whole. If there is a safety issue, that is between the two teams. The league has very limited language in the bylaws regarding rules about individual pools. Parking is not addressed in GRAL bylaws, so it is a pool issue, not a league issue.

- Colonies heat sheet ad was paid for, but was not in the heat sheet. Told to email Christy and we can get a refund for that error.
- Sunday at Champs, the sprinklers went off in the field where families were sitting. SwimRVA needs to know for next year to turn off the sprinklers.
- Concern from Colonies that meet 2 was a disaster because of the cold weather and very concerned about pushing the schedule up a week earlier due to cold water temps. They feel bylaws regarding weather need to be looked at because it was unsafe at that meet. Chesnut Oaks reminded the group that each family needs to make the decision that is best for their children, and there would be no repercussions if they chose not to swim. Kristin stated that the decision to cancel cannot be made until 6:00, that is a league rule. If it's cold, that is not justification to cancel early. The people who run each pool decide if driving rain/cannot see the bottom of the pool cause unsafe conditions or whether the pool water is too cold to be safe for the human body. She recommended telling families to stay home and wait for a text update if there is a major issue (like a tornado warning).

Motion to adjourn by Bell Creek, second by Federal Club

Adjourned 8:25 pm

Respectfully submitted by Julie Zubris, GRAL Secretary