



Virginia

Babe Ruth Baseball & Softball



MINUTES

April 18, 2021

Irene Givens Administration Building, Montgomery Hall Park
1000 Montgomery Avenue
Staunton, Virginia

In Attendance

| | |
|---|---|
| Paul Link, State Commissioner | Gayle Clary, District 2 Asst. Commissioner |
| Phillip Larcomb, Secretary-Treasurer | Curtis Moore, District 3 Commissioner |
| John DeYoung, Asst. State Comm., Baseball Opns. | Topper Phelps, District 3 Asst. Commissioner |
| Glenn Spangler, Asst. State Comm., Training | Ken Bosserman, District 4 Commissioner |
| Robert Faherty, Babe Ruth Senior V.P. | Pat O'Brien, District 6 Asst. Commissioner |
| John Armentrout, Asst. SER Commissioner | Sheri Zimmerman, District 7 Commissioner |
| Don Rose, Jr., State Umpire-in-Chief | Dave Cogar, District 8 Commissioner |
| George Burke, State Umpire Advisor | Marty Gordon, District 10 Softball Commissioner |
| Brandon Currence, District 1 Commissioner | Doug Bates, Wise Cal Ripken League |
| Tommy Clary, District 2 Commissioner | Tammy Bates, Wise Cal Ripken League |

[Owing to restrictions on the number of participants to comply with guidelines during the pandemic, only members of the Board of Directors of Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc. and other members of Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc. invited by the State Commissioner were able to attend the meeting (Section VII, paragraph C, of the State Bylaws was waived in this force majeure situation).]

Paul Link, State Commissioner, called the meeting to order at 12:34 p.m.

Invocation: Ken Bosserman offered the invocation, dedicating the day's business to the benefit of Virginia's baseball- and softball-playing kids.

Moment of silence: A moment of silence was requested for Glen Cordell (40 years – Vienna Babe Ruth), Laverne Flint (46 years – Warwick Moose), Bob Gerber (38 years – FCA, District 6 and 13 Commissioner), and David Gushee (43 years –Vienna Babe Ruth, Virginia District 7 Commissioner, and State Secretary-Treasurer).

A motion was approved to make a \$500 memorial contribution to the Babe Ruth Alumni Association in memory of these four Babe Ruth volunteers.

Introduction of guests: Introduction of Robert Faherty, Senior Vice President, Babe Ruth National Headquarters; John Armentrout, Assistant Commissioner, Southeast Region; and Doug and Tammy Bates, Wise Cal Ripken League.

Roll call: Paul Link had the District Commissioners introduce themselves and give a brief description of the geographical locations they represent in the State.

Reading of the minutes: By unanimous vote, the reading of the minutes of the Fall 2020 meeting was waived.

Treasurer's report: Phil Larcomb reported that the State treasury contained, as of April 17, 2021, \$10,988 in the checking account and \$90,868 in the mutual funds account for total cash and reserves of \$101,556. The accounts receivable balance was \$8,080. There were no liabilities. A one-time distribution of \$10,000 was taken from the mutual funds account on April 12, 2021. 31 out of 34 leagues that did not charter and (or) pay in 2020 have been billed. All baseball State contracts have been billed. Softball State contracts will be sent out later in April.

OLD BUSINESS

Opening remarks: Paul Link thanked the District Commissioners and the leagues in persevering through 2020 and not giving up. Paul mentioned that the State has hit the ground running in 2021 with Districts 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 being among the first to achieve 100% of their leagues chartered early in the process. Additionally, our Umpire Advisors have held seven new umpire training sessions.

The challenge for this year is declining registrations at both ends of the age spectrum (T-Ball and 13-18) as players were forced to skip important developmental years. The extended HS season of April – June seriously limits the regular season for both 13-15 and 16-18 year-olds plus adds additional challenges to the already compressed tournament trail for the 16-18 year-olds.

A positive sign is that there is greater Babe Ruth Headquarters Commissioner communications with twice monthly Zoom calls and webinars hosted by Rob Connor. Going forward, the District Commissioners will be asked to support more league marketing efforts than ever before as Babe Ruth continues to bring in more business partners.

Some of the new business partners have been on video streaming (Go Dog Sports), the Personal Swing Coach App, Vision Training, the Heart of the Babe Award, Opening Day supported by Dicks, and Augusta Sportswear.

With COVID-19 still an ongoing issue, Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia will have to remain flexible and totally aware of the continuously evolving governmental and health department regulations that affect both practice and play. The State of Maryland is already experiencing a COVID outbreak in youth sports which could lead to more shutdowns of youth sports. Paul emphasized that all of us must work together to make 2021 a successful season. Any District Commissioner or league that needs help should reach out to Paul or our Designated Helper at Headquarters.

2021 Regional tournaments in Virginia: John DeYoung reported that Virginia would be the host for three 2021 Southeast Regional tournaments—the 11s70, the 12s60, and the 16-18s, all hosted by the Stafford Babe Ruth League with a check-in date of July 14. These are all posted on the “Tournament Brackets & Archive” page of the State website.

Background Check and Abuse Prevention Training information: Paul Link reported that everyone is required to use the Babe Ruth approved vendor to do checks and training. The reason is that coaches and volunteers who should not be around kids were getting through the checks provided by other vendors with less strict standards. For example, there have been 322 flagged volunteers since 2019. 120 already for 2021 and 49 just since March 31. These numbers are included in the April 15 Commissioner Update. Paul reminded the Commissioners to be diligent about this requirement. Failure to enforce this requirement could lead to a huge financial liability for our leagues and Babe Ruth Leagues, Inc.

Hold harmless waiver: John DeYoung explained that Babe Ruth League does not require a waiver (a “release of liability and assumption of risk agreement”) but has provided a sample waiver on its website as a starting point if leagues wish to or are required by local governments to have a waiver in place. Because Virginia is one of the few States that provides robust protection to injury victims who signed waiver of liability clauses, it behooves us to make anyone who signs such a document to be aware that, with some narrow exceptions, they are not sacrificing their right to file a lawsuit by signing a liability waiver in Virginia [Johnson’s Adm’x v. Richmond and Danville R.R. Co., 86 Va. 975 (1890); Hiatt v. Lake Barcroft Community Assoc., 244 Va. 191, 194-195 (1992).] If any league would like a thusly amended document, John will make it available.

Buddy Ball plans for 2021: Paul reported only Herndon is playing Buddy Ball in 2021. Other leagues that had participation in the past were Waynesboro and Williamsburg but have opted out of the spring 2021 season due to COVID concerns about these special needs players.

Commotio cordis chest protector: John DeYoung asked District Commissioners to ensure that their leagues were aware of the possible requirement that chest protectors for baseball catchers must meet NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) Standard ND200 after January 1, 2022. NOCSAE first approved the standard in January 2017. Effective as of January 1, 2020, chest protectors used in high school and college baseball must be NOCSAE certified. This rule is not in place yet for youth players (anyone below high school level), however, knowing this information will allow parents to safely equip their youth player and leagues to budget for this expense. The NOCSAE website has a link to the website of the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI), which has a list of all products that meet NOCSAE standards. US Lacrosse was the first governing body to take action to mandate this standard. Beginning this year, US Lacrosse requires that all goalies in girls’ and boys’ lacrosse wear protectors that meet the new NOCSAE commotio cordis performance standard. This requirement will extend to all field players in boys’ lacrosse beginning in 2022.

Robert Faherty explained that Babe Ruth League, Inc. was monitoring this issue and any guidance from USA Baseball. USA Baseball’s website states that “Commercial chest protection has not been shown to be effective in preventing commotio cordis.”

https://www.usabdevelops.com/USAB/Blog/Commotio_Cordis.aspx

Test pilot program for 16-year-old players: John DeYoung explained that again this year, each Babe Ruth 13-15 league is permitted to conduct a test pilot program to allow league age 16-year-old players to participate in their local league. These players will NOT be eligible for tournament competition. The purpose of this option, which was first offered in 2016, is to see if it will create a more enjoyable local league experience owing to an increase in eligible players; enhance the 15-year-old and 16-year-old participants' experience owing to size, ability, and skills being comparable; and increase the local league's overall participation numbers. If a league wishes to be part of this program, they must notify Robert Faherty, Senior Vice President and Commissioner, via email at robert@baberruthleague.org so that compliance with insurance requirements can be ensured.

State website: John DeYoung recalled that, at the 2019 State Spring Meeting, Paul mentioned the State website home page offers valuable information that all Commissioners should be aware of. In addition to late news, a navigation directory so that the user can find, for example, State Policies, State Meeting announcements, MTIPs, and State tournament information are all posted on the site. The State Spring Meeting notice and agenda had been posted on the State home page for over a month. Paul asked that, during the Babe Ruth season, each Commissioner check the website for updates at least twice a week. The website was introduced in 1999 by John Armentrout, the State's current Webmaster and now Webmaster for the Southeast Region, the Southwest Region, and a list of States that exceeds the time for this agenda item!

NEW BUSINESS

What is new in 2021

- **Headquarters twice monthly communications:** Paul Link asked the Commissioners to open and review them immediately upon receipt.
- **New Southeast Regional (SER) Commissioner:** Paul Link announced that John Lucas, the former Florida State Commissioner and Southeast Region Hall of Fame member, is our new Southeast Regional Commissioner. Henry Sermons is now an At-Large Member of the International Board of Directors.
- John Lucas held a Regional meeting via Zoom on January 16, 2021. In addition to certain administrative issues regarding bylaws and policies, covered topics included:
 - BRL video streaming partner (GoDog Sports) Sam Walker
 - Any league interested in hosting a 2022 SER tournament needs to apply.
 - SER HoF and Silver (and Gold) Club
 - Ray Walker and E.G. Smith HoF
 - 25-Year Pin for Keith Cobb, Williamsburg Board Member
 - All SER States use the 50%-games-played rule for eligibility
 - No SER softball invitational in 2021 (maybe next year)

Status of league charters (handout): Paul Link reported that only JBL Fort Eustis and Floyd had not chartered to date. Previous leagues that will not charter in 2021 are Smithfield (one 13-15 team), James River Baseball (never played in 2020), Nottoway (two Babe Ruth 13-15 teams and two 16-18 teams owing to loss of a high school field), Glen Lea (four Cal Ripken teams), and Augusta Softball (which now charters as individual leagues).

Listing of new leagues for 2021 (handout): Paul Link reported District 10 had the following new Cal Ripken leagues, Giles, Montgomery County, Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Pulaski, Radford, and Wise Youth Sports. Arlington Cal Ripken increased by 20 T-Ball teams from 25 to 45 for the 2021 season.

David Gushee Memorial Grant for New Leagues: Paul Link made a motion to establish a grant in memory of David Gushee dedicated to help fund new leagues within the Commonwealth of Virginia and new leagues in other States which are chartering to be part of Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc. and to make the first award of \$5,000 to Wise Youth Sports c/o the Wise Cal Ripken League. The motion was approved unanimously. The State Board also authorized a \$5,000 loan to Wise Youth Sports to be repaid over 2 years.

2021 rosters: Paul Link reminded the District Commissioners to remind leagues to get the rosters done early and to check the accuracy of data, email addresses, phone numbers, and player and coach addresses on the rosters.

New Rookie rules for 2021: Paul Link reported that the State will follow the final approved Regional Rookies Rules that will be posted on the State website.

Rule changes for 2021: John DeYoung explained that Babe Ruth League's email of February 2, 2021 (Subject: 2021 Rule Changes) announced the rule changes for this season. Changes included new requirements for Background Checks and Abuse Prevention Training, eligibility for participation in the 16-18 Division, and the use of the Designated Hitter Rule and courtesy runners in the 16-18 Division. This information is all posted on the "Current Rule Changes" page of the State website.

Corrections to errors in 2021 baseball rule book: John DeYoung noted that there is an error on page 69 of the 2021 printed Baseball Rule Book. Paragraph 3.i of Rule 6.10 (the Designated Hitter Rule for 16-18s) is not correct. Refer to 3.i in the Babe Ruth League email of February 2, 2021 (Subject: 2021 Rule Changes) or to the "Current Rule Changes" page of the State website for the correct wording of that paragraph.

Tournament Directors training meeting (dates and location(s)) [corrected on May 13, 2021]: Glenn Spangler reported that this year's workshops will be held on ~~June 6~~ **June 5** in Staunton and ~~June 7~~ **June 6** in Varina (Dorey Park). Tournament Directors or their representatives must attend one of these workshops, where trophies, patches, and banners will be distributed to the host leagues. The tournament UICs must also attend one of

these workshops. Paul requested that the hosting District Commissioners attend this training. Glenn also encouraged league presidents of the host leagues to attend as well.

16-18 Area and State tournaments: Paul Link said that the Area tournaments will begin on July 1 to 3 with the State tournament to be held the following weekend (July 7–12).

2021 State tournaments (host leagues and estimated teams):

Baseball: John DeYoung reported that host leagues, locations, start dates, and State Representatives for the 10 2021 State baseball tournaments are posted on the “Tournament Brackets & Archive” page of the State website. State Policy #1003, also posted on the State website, requires that each District must report to the number of teams that will participate in each State tournament not later than May 15. Brackets and amounts of the Parents Gate Pass Program Fee for each tournament cannot be determined until after all information is received.

Softball: Paul reported that District softball tournaments will be optional with the State having an open State tournament for each age group. There will be no Regional softball tournaments in 2021.

Regional and World Series tournament locations and reporting dates (handout):

John DeYoung noted that all 2021 State, Regional, and World Series tournament locations and dates are listed in the handout that Paul Link distributed and are posted on the “Tournament Brackets & Archive” page of the State website.

Status of tournament contracts and payments: Phil Larcomb reported that all host baseball leagues except for softball have been identified and their host contracts and invoices prepared. The information is posted on the State website.

Machine Pitch Invitational (7s): Paul provided information that Premier Sporting Events of Glen Allen in partnership with Glen Allen Youth Athletic Association BRL and Greater Richmond Lakeside Youth BRL will host a machine pitch invitational on June 25–27 at RF&P Park. To date, three teams have already signed up.

Assignment of State Tournament Representatives: Paul Link handed out the State representative assignments for the 2021 State tournaments.

Options for a divided State structure (like Florida and Tennessee): Paul provided information and a map of options for dividing the State of Virginia into two or three separate geographical areas. Several questions came out of the discussion of Virginia being split in half.

- 1) When would the split happen?
- 2) Would the current Executive Committee and (or) Board of Directors remain in place? Would there be additional Executive Committee and (or) Board of Directors members?
- 3) If the split is done for the 2022 season, how many teams will be allowed to go to

- the Regionals?
- 4) What happens if the State is divided into 3 or even 4 separate areas? Will all three or four State champions go to the Regionals?
 - 5) Would the Runners-up go to the Regionals?

After much discussion on this topic, it was decided to bring this subject up at the 2021 Fall State Meeting. Paul asked each Commissioner to submit their written ideas and feedback in advance of the State Fall Meeting.

Trophies and patches: Ken Bosserman reported that he has ordered the trophies and patches for the 2021 State Champions. Paul Link reported that K& K Insurance is no longer providing State Champion plaques. A motion to purchase State Champion plaques for all baseball and softball State Champions passed unanimously.

Waiver process review: A “blanket waiver” request for less than four teams in a league and less than 12 players on a team was approved by Headquarters. They are available for download from the State website.

Virginia Babe Ruth Umpires Association (VBRUA): Donny Rose reported that there was 148 National Umpire Association (NUA) baseball and 19 NUA softball umpires registered to date. The VBRUA stands ready to help league officials identify umpires for both regular season play and tournament play. To help VBRUA to do this, Donny Rose asks the District Commissioners to find out from their leagues what umpire association(s) they use for umpires so that he, George Burke, and Bruce Frye can interact with them for mutual benefit.

Umpire training: George Burke reported that six baseball umpire training sessions and one softball training session have already been held. Three more clinics are scheduled. About 54 umpires have participated so far. George will reach out to Marty Gordon to schedule umpire clinics in District 10.

Umpire assignments for District and State tournaments: Donny Rose will work closely with Paul Link, District Commissioners, and Tournament Directors to identify and schedule umpires, all of whom must be certified by both the NUA and the VBRUA.

VBRUA compensation schedule for 2021: A motion was approved to adopt the 2021 State tournament umpire fees. The new umpire compensation schedule is only for the State level. District commissioners are not required to use the same structure for their District tournaments.

Parents Gate Pass Fee Schedule for 2021 (baseball and softball): John DeYoung reviewed State Policy #1001, the Parents Gate Pass Program, which is a method of admission fees that is assessed on the parents of each team as a lump-sum calculated fee in lieu of having an admission gate for spectators. It is not a team entry fee. The District Champions and other participants in State tournaments shall be instructed by the District Commissioner that the Parents Gate Pass Program Fee be presented at book check-in

time. This requirement is listed on the Tournament Team Checklist form specifying documents required to be in the tournament team's credentials book. The calculation of the Parents Gate Pass Program Fee is based on the cost of umpires (not counting the IF game), the cost of baseballs or softballs, and the State Hosting Fee. No other items are considered in this calculation. John explained that the Parents Gate Pass Program Fee (PGPPF) table for 2021 State baseball tournaments (played in the default double-elimination format) would be created when the input costs were determined. When the number of participating teams is determined for a State baseball tournament, John will enter the PGPPF amount in the MTIP if this option is chosen by the host league. A similar approach will be used for softball.

2021 Tournament Team Checklist: John DeYoung reported that this year's Tournament Team Checklist remains the same as last year's document. The Virginia State checklist requires approved waivers and School Attendance Forms and four copies of the Player Announcement Form, items which are not on the checklist for the Southeast Region. The form can be downloaded from the "Documents Download Center" of the State website; it is listed (alphabetically) as "Checklist - Tournament Team."

Games Played Chart: The league Presidents may use the Games Played Chart, available on the State website, as an aid to check the playing time requirement (State Policy #1022). The Games Played Chart is no longer required as tournament book checklist item. The District Commissioners may or may not use the Games Played Chart when checking tournament credentials.

Washington Nationals Champions Day: Paul Link reported that his contact at the Nationals has no information available at this time because attendance rules are at the option of the District of Columbia.

Scholarship and grant programs: Paul Link reminded the District Commissioners to ensure that their leagues were aware of the following State and Headquarters deadlines. In the past, Virginia had numerous individuals be awarded the National Babe Ruth scholarships.

Virginia Babe Ruth Grant Program Deadline – 1 Sep 2021

This proposed program is designed to award financial grants to chartered Babe Ruth Leagues within Virginia's defined boundaries to improve playing facilities and equipment for the benefit of Virginia Babe Ruth baseball and softball players.

Grants will be awarded annually and will range from \$500 to \$1500. Applications must be submitted to the State Commissioner by September 1. The awards will be announced in December and payments will be sent before the end of the year. The individual applications will be reviewed by the State Executive Committee, who will evaluate the applications. The number of grants approved each year will depend primarily on the earnings from our reserves.

Each applicant must submit an official grant application form (available from the State Commissioner) and have it approved by the appropriate District Commissioner. Each project submitted must have a separate application form.

Babe Ruth College Scholarship Program. This program provides financial assistance to former Cal Ripken Baseball, Babe Ruth Baseball, and Babe Ruth Softball players looking to further their education beyond high school. The former player must file his or her own application. Details are available from Babe Ruth Headquarters or by phone at 800-880-3143.

- Babe Ruth Scholarship Program: June 30
- Jamie Horne Softball Scholarship: September 1
- MLB Youth Development Grants: Quarterly applications

2022 World Series in Virginia: In 2022, Glen Allen will host the 13-Year-Olds World Series and Stafford will host the 13-15 Year-Olds World Series.

Bylaws amendments: John DeYoung presented to the group a motion to approve three proposed Bylaw amendments which were included in the Spring Meeting agenda and are included at the end of these minutes. The proposed changes are to 1) allow for leagues that are not located in the Commonwealth of Virginia to be members of Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc., 2) change the title of the State's umpire consultants to Umpire Advisors in order to make it clear that their invaluable service to the State organization is provided without financial remuneration, and 3) to allow for electronic meetings when in-person meetings cannot be held owing to circumstances such as we have been experiencing during the past year.

The motion for the amendments to the Bylaws passed unanimously.

Nominating Committee for Fall 2021 elections: Paul Link reminded the group that all Commissioners are up for re-election at the State Fall Meeting. Paul assigned a Nominating Committee made up of the following:

Sheri Zimmerman (Chair)
Matt Clark
Brandon Currence

General discussion:

District dues – How are District tournament awards handled? Most of the District Commissioners reported that they do not charge their leagues for District dues.

COVID-19 – If a team has Covid-19, then they will be automatically quarantined from the State tournament trail. Each State tournament host league must communicate in writing the mask-wearing and other requirements for their respective tournament. More information will be given out at the Tournament Directors meeting in June.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Prepared by Phillip Larcomb, Secretary-Treasurer

Proposed Bylaws amendments

1. Proposed amendment to the State Bylaws (Section IV. – Membership, paragraph A) to be voted upon at the State Spring Meeting on 18 April 2021

Reason for proposed change: The current wording (“... within the Commonwealth of Virginia ...”) does not include leagues in West Virginia.

Current text: (1) All Districts and Leagues within the Commonwealth of Virginia whose Annual Charter application has been presented to and approved by National Headquarters of Babe Ruth League, Inc., and by Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc.

Suggested change: (1) All Districts and Leagues within the Commonwealth of Virginia **(and Leagues in other States which are part of Virginia Districts)** whose Annual Charter application has been presented to and approved by National Headquarters of Babe Ruth League, Inc., and by Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc.

Revised text: (1) All Districts and Leagues within the Commonwealth of Virginia (and Leagues in other States which are part of Virginia Districts) whose Annual Charter application has been presented to and approved by National Headquarters of Babe Ruth League, Inc., and by Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc.

2. Proposed amendment to the State Bylaws (Section V. – Officers, paragraph F. – Duties of Officers) to be voted upon at the State Spring Meeting on 18 April 2021

Reason for proposed changes: To be consistent with terminology used in the Southeast Region’s Bylaws.

Current text: (8) State Umpire Consultant: Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc. shall have a minimum of four Umpire Consultants appointed by the State Commissioner (two Consultants for baseball, and two for softball). ... Under the direction of the State Commissioner and the Umpire-in-Chief, the Umpire Consultants are responsible for ...

Suggested changes: (8) State Umpire Consultant Advisor: Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc. shall have a minimum of four Umpire **Consultants Advisors** appointed by the State Commissioner (two **Consultants Advisors** for baseball, and two for softball). ... Under the direction of the State Commissioner and the Umpire-in-Chief, the Umpire **Consultants Advisors** are responsible for ...

Revised text: (8) State Umpire Advisor: Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc. shall have a minimum of four Umpire Advisors appointed by the State Commissioner (two Advisors for baseball, and two for softball). ... Under the direction of the State Commissioner and the Umpire-in-Chief, the Umpire Advisors are responsible for ...

3. Proposed amendment to the State Bylaws (Section VII. – Parliamentary Procedures and Meetings, paragraph H) to be voted upon at the State Spring Meeting on 18 April 2021

Reason for proposed change: To allow for meetings to be held electronically when needed.

Current text: none

Suggested change (addition): **H. When in-person meetings cannot take place, electronic (Zoom or other platform) meetings can be held to satisfy the requirements for meetings.**

Revised text: H. When in-person meetings cannot take place, electronic (Zoom or other platform) meetings can be held to satisfy the requirements for meetings.