

# MINUTES September 22, 2019 Irene Givens Administration Building, Montgomery Hall Park 1000 Montgomery Avenue Staunton, Virginia

## In Attendance

Paul Link, State Commissioner Don Gowen, Asst. State Comm., Softball Opns. Tom Richardson, Asst. State Comm., Training Tommy Clary, District 2 Commissioner Glenn Spangler, District 4 Softball Commissioner Don Rose, Jr., State Umpire-in-Chief Dave Cogar, District 8 Commissioner John Kemper, District 9 Commissioner Brandon Currence, District 1 Commissioner Shawn Boynton, District 7 Asst. Commissioner Greg Phillips, South Augusta President John DeYoung, Asst. State Comm., Baseball Opns. Phillip Larcomb, Secretary-Treasurer Curtis Moore, District 3 Commissioner Ken Bosserman, District 4 Baseball Commissioner Dennis Cobb, District 4 Asst. Commissioner Gayle Clary, District 2 Asst. Commissioner Myron Struck, District 6 Commissioner Topper Phelps, District 3 Asst. Commissioner Nancy Currence, District 1 Asst. Commissioner Pat O'Brien, District 6 Asst. Commissioner

Tommy Clary offered the invocation, dedicating the day's business to the benefit of Virginia's baseball- and softball-playing kids.

Paul Link, State Commissioner, called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

Paul reported that Mary Clarke (Greater Manassas Baseball League), John Lesch (Northern Fairfax County 16-18 BRL) and Patrick Wickline (Herndon-Reston Cal Ripken League) had recently passed away and requested a Moment of Silence in their honor.

By unanimous vote, the reading of the minutes of the Spring Meeting was waived.

Phil Larcomb reported that the State treasury contained, as of September 21, 2019, \$4,469.10 in the checking account (compared with \$1,835.15 at the end of October 2018) and \$89,683 in the mutual funds (compared to \$91,895 at the end of October 2018). A distribution of \$10,000 was taken on November 8, 2018, leaving a balance of \$81,895. As of 14 September, the State has a paper gain of \$7,788 in the mutual funds account.

The total net income to date was \$32,440. Expenses to date are \$33,397. The State is operating at a net loss of \$957 for the year. The net income includes the Waynesboro passthrough of almost \$4,400. With the upcoming Southeast Region meeting at the end of October, the State anticipates being almost \$1,500 over budget for the fiscal year.

The Executive Committee approved \$3,500 in grants to five leagues in December 2018. Another \$4,000 was distributed in July and August to help in the World Series travel for the three baseball teams and one softball team that earned their way to the World Series. The remaining funds were used to pay for the Southeast Region meeting expenses in November 2018.

There were no higher-than-anticipated budgeted expenses for the 2019 fiscal year. The Washington Nationals Champions Day decreased by almost \$1,650 compared to 2018. We spent \$6,434 on the State tournaments for trophies, plaques, banners, shirts, rings, and patches. We spent \$2,375 on the website and the development of the automated billing system that eliminated hundreds of hours of work for the Secretary-Treasurer position. We spent over \$4,611.17 on travel to the Southeast Region meeting in November 2018.

Several expected expenses, including State officer expenses, have not yet been submitted, but from informal estimates of those expenses, it looks like income for the year will be close to expenses.

# **OLD BUSINESS**

## State Commissioner's Year-end Reflections on 2019

Paul reported that Virginia achieved player and team growth in both baseball and softball. [In total, we grew by 74 teams and 888 players.] New leagues joined in Lynnhaven, Floyd County, and Smithfield. We added a division in Central Chesterfield (Rookie), and the Metro Junior League in Richmond doubled their size from four to eight teams. This trend will continue into 2020 as we expect new softball leagues in Williamsburg and Northside (who have already chartered a fall league). In addition to the growth on the peninsula, we have also had information requests from baseball leagues in Southern Chesapeake and Virginia Beach. We survived the first year of mandatory background checks and abuse training without issue. We achieved 100% compliance with online rosters but not without intervention. This is still a lingering issue that just refuses to go away. From a Treasury perspective, we had the best year yet in collecting State dues and tournament fees on time. The invoicing and collection process was improved by Phil Larcomb working in tandem with John Armentrout to automate the billing process and the tracking of payments. Virginia had great success with two invitational tournaments for 6- and 7- year-olds, age groups that need our focus now more than ever.

We hosted four Regional baseball tournaments and one Regional Qualifier for softball. Virginia teams won three baseball Regional tournaments (Rookie, 10s, and 13-15s). We sent four softball and three baseball teams to World Series in Florida, Alabama, and North Dakota. Even with our tournament director training, we still had a forfeit in a championship game owing to a pitching rule violation.

Overall, it was another great year which is a testimonial to all our Commissioners, UICs, umpire consultants, and all the league presidents and parent volunteers that give their time so selflessly. Paul concluded his remarks by saying Thank You to the entire Virginia Babe Ruth membership.

# **Review of 2019 Growth and Commissioner Challenge**

At the State Spring Meeting in Charlottesville, Paul challenged every Commissioner to challenge their leagues to grow by one player in each age group for the 2019 season. Overall, the State grew by 74 teams and 888 players. We had an increase of 61 T-Ball teams and 17 Minors teams. Other age groups lost a few teams.

# **District Reports – District Commissioners**

D1 – Brandon Currence reported that he had a great year and welcomed two new Virginia Beach leagues. The Virginia Beach leagues usually play PONY baseball. Minor issues reported were leagues playing by PONY rules and not Babe Ruth rules. Brandon mentioned that he may have two more leagues interested in joining Babe Ruth next year.

D2 – Tommy Clary reported that Dixie Youth Baseball has a very strong hold in this area. Tommy mentioned that South Hill hosted the 16-18 Year-olds State tournament this year with no issues.

D3 – Curtis Moore reported that Glen Allen went to the 12U Softball World Series. The softball leagues in District 3 are looking for a more traditional way for postseason play. District 3 also had some growth in baseball.

D4 - Ken Bosserman said that District 4 had a great year in baseball with some minor issues with the PerfectPitchARM<sup>TM</sup> pitching machine.

D5 – No report (District Commissioner not in attendance)

D6 – Myron Struck reported he had issues with book checks at the 13-15 Year-olds State tournament at Barcroft. He also reported having issues getting umpires for his regular season and District tournament games. The reason given was the amount of pay.

D7 – Shawn Boynton reported that the county sprinkler system was left on overnight and made the field a mess for the 14-Year-olds State tournament. Shawn also reported that the District Commissioner had issues with umpires.

D8 – Dave Cogar said that travel ball has made an impact on his local leagues. Dave reported that his leagues had major issues with the PerfectPitchARM<sup>TM</sup> pitching machine.

D9 – John Kemper said that District 9 had a decline in Cal Ripken but an increase in Babe Ruth teams. John had problems getting umpires for games this year.

D10 – No report (District Commissioner not in attendance)

# State Tournament Review—Baseball

Paul handed out four awards (Skor candy bars) for this year's State and Regional tournaments in Virginia.

- Best Hot Dog: Williamsburg for the hot dog vending stand at the Regional tournament
- Best Drink: Arlington for their multiflavored slushies (good on 100-degree days)
- Most Creative: Waynesboro for their Virginia Country Ham sandwich
- Teamwork Award: Manassas for providing a field at the E.G. Smith Complex to Pioneer for the Rookie State tournament championship game when Clermont Park was flooded

Paul reported that overall we had a great tournament season. However, there were areas of concern that need attention and improvement going into the 2020 season. Some of the observations were as follows:

- Kids in the press box counting pitches, announcing, and scorekeeping (no adult supervision)
- Umpires allowing coaches to change the rules regarding courtesy runners
- Confusion regarding pitch-count challenges after the game is over regarding the last inning
- Pitchers being warmed up without the catcher wearing a helmet
- Umpire using his cell phone while on the field and the game in progress
- Umpires not showing up at 16U Softball
- State Representative not in the press box area

John DeYoung reported that rain at the Rookie State tournament resulted in the tournament championship game being moved to Manassas. John said we had three Virginia State baseball champion teams that were Regional Champions and advanced to the World Series. One team, Arlington's 13-15s, ended up playing the last game at night and then the first game the next morning at the World Series in Bismarck, North Dakota. John said that this should not happen and would bring it up at this year's Southeast Region meeting.

# Softball Regional Qualifier Review

Paul reported that there were no tournament issues, but the Regional Qualifier concept caused teams to not participate in the State tournament since the qualifier was played first. We also had teams winning and not attending the World Series.

Going forward, Virginia will have the State tournament first prior to the Region tournament. Paul does not believe Virginia has more than four teams at each age group that are competitive enough to compete in the World Series.

Paul will schedule at least two focus group meetings with the softball Presidents and Commissioners to see how they would like to see us schedule the Regional and State tournaments.

# State Tournament Review—Softball

Paul said the host leagues (Manassas, Deep Creek, and Rockville) did excellent jobs of running the State softball tournaments. Only four teams participated at 14U and only two teams at 16U. This is a continuing issue. Paul reported that Marty Gordon of District 10 had a military day and a food bank drive for his District tournaments. This idea led to larger crowds at his softball tournaments. [Over 500 attendees]

# **Review of Rookie Invitational Tournaments (6- and 7-year-olds) – Glen Allen and New Kent**

Paul reported that this is the future of Babe Ruth and that the tournaments were both well attended and well run this year. The new PerfectPitchARM<sup>TM</sup> pitching machines were used along with the Blue Flame. The new machines needed maintenance during the games.

# **MOTION**

The State will support (with baseballs, awards, banners, etc.) the Babe Ruth Rookie 6- & 7-yearolds Invitational Tournament along with a signed contract for the host.

Motion passed unanimously.

Williamsburg will host this tournament in 2020.

# Feedback on Tournament Rules Summaries (in the Documents Download Center)

District 1 provided great feedback on this document. Paul mentioned this is an evolving document and that we need to include that there is no Babe Ruth rule that prohibits head-first sliding; it is allowed. The summary can be given to the umpires, but we always need to go to the rule book for clarification.

### Feedback on Background Checks and Abuse Training

Paul mentioned that headquarters will contact the league president to review any volunteer who fails the background check. Only the league president will have knowledge of who fails.

### Feedback on Virginia Games Played Requirement (State Policy #1022)

All States in the Southeast Region adhered to the 2018 number of games played policy. Paul received two complaints (a Gainesville parent and a Pioneer board member).

# Feedback on Virginia Pitching Age Requirement (Baseball Swing Player Pitching Limitations – State Policy #1019)

Headquarters has said our policy regarding pitch count limits applying to the age of the player is in conflict with Babe Ruth rules on pitch counts limits applying to the age group of the team or tournament and that, in the case of a protest, headquarters will not support us and will uphold the protest.

### Feedback on the PerfectPitchARM<sup>™</sup> Pitching Machine

Leagues reported major issues with the PerfectPitchARM<sup>TM</sup> pitching machine. Paul will leave it up to the local leagues to decide which machines to use for local play.

# Feedback on New Tournament Team Book Checklist (in the Documents Download Center)

The District Commissioners reported positive feedback on the new checklist. Virginia uses three checks in addition to those on the Southeast Region checklist: copies of all approved waivers and School Attendance Forms, four copies of the Tournament Player Announcement Form (typed), and a check for Parents Gate Pass Program Fee made out to the Host league (if applicable).

## **Feedback on Scholarship Applicants**

Paul Link asked the group if they knew of anyone who had applied this year. No one was aware of any applicants. Paul said the application is now in the Documents Download Center on the State website. Paul set the goal of having one applicant in 2020 from each District with 16-18 Year-olds leagues. Personal discussion with players and coaches is needed and not emails. We need to show them where the applications are and how easy it is to apply. [The deadlines are stated on the application forms and will be reviewed at the Spring Meeting.]

[It was learned after the meeting that Colin Mahoney of Bristow, VA (Greater Manassas Babe Ruth League), has been awarded one of the 2019 Presidential Scholarships of Babe Ruth League, Inc. Colin is studying at the University of Mary Washington.]

### Feedback on Sports Sign-up Play

There was no feedback provided by the District Commissioners.

# **Buddy Ball Review**

Don Gowen reported that two leagues (Williamsburg and Herndon) hosted Buddy Ball events this year and it was an amazing time for all involved in the program. Unfortunately, the Waynesboro event was rained out this year but will be first on the schedule for next season.

# **Umpire Training Review**

Donny Rose reported that he and George Burke conducted six umpire training events for the year. Donny pleaded to the District Commissioners to continuously recruit new umpires and to reach out to him for their training, certification, and tournament assignments. Pay seems to be a big reason for our umpire recruiting issues. We are proposing a fee schedule change [approved later in this meeting].

# **NEW BUSINESS**

# **Proposed Bylaw Amendment**

John DeYoung presented to the group the following proposed Bylaw amendment motion for the Assistant State Commissioner, Training & Compliance position:

# **MOTION**

<u>Assistant State Commissioner, Training:</u> Under the direction of the State Commissioner, the Assistant State Commissioner, Training is responsible for the preparation of training manuals and for training of Leagues and Districts in all aspects of State, Regional, and National Babe Ruth rules and regulations to include, but not limited to, league set-up, chartering and insurance, team composition requirements, scheduling requirements, tournament team composition requirements, and responsibilities of host leagues and Tournament Directors of State tournaments. In addition, works with the State Cal Ripken and Babe Ruth Divisions umpire consultants to assist in preparation of training manuals, and to arrange for training materials for local umpire training and certification. Performs other related duties as directed by the State Commissioner.

Motion for the Bylaw amendment passed unanimously.

## **Election of Officers for 2019–21**

Four of the incumbents for State offices were re-nominated. There were no nominations from the floor. It was VOTED unanimously to re-elect the incumbent officers:

State Commissioner – Paul Link Assistant State Commissioner, Baseball Operations – John DeYoung Assistant State Commissioner, Softball Operations – Don Gowen Secretary-Treasurer – Phillip Larcomb

For the Assistant State Commissioner, Training position, Glenn Spangler was elected by ballot by the District Commissioners in attendance.

### 2020 Budget

Although the fiscal year is not yet complete, it appears that the 2019 outcome will be close to budget. Operating expenses may slightly exceed operating revenue. The decrease in the Washington Nationals Champions Day, the Tournament Directors Training Workshop, and Umpire Training Clinics, all expanded in the past several years, account for the much of the change in the 2019 budget year. In addition, the State has contracted with an accounting firm and a legal firm to handle our need for income tax preparation assistance and for legal representation. This was done because these functions continue, but the volunteers change over time. Income from the reserves is more than enough to cover the difference. Therefore, the same budget policies will be followed in 2020.

Phil reminded the Board that the State reserves have increased significantly over the past year, primarily because the State Commissioner has donated his expenses back to the State at the end of each year and the fact that the stock market has been strong. The reserves represent a positive cash flow for the period of November 2018 to present.

# **MOTION**

The Board VOTED to continue the current budget policy for 2020.

## 2020 State Baseball Tournament Host Leagues and Contract Status

As things stand at meeting time, the hosts for 2020 State baseball tournaments are as follows:

Tournament	State Host	Regional Host
Rookies	D8 – Gainesville-Haymarket	New Kent, VA
9s	D3 – tbd	Snow Hill, NC
10s	D1 – tbd	Lawrenceburg, TN
11s70	D5 – tbd	Stafford, VA
12s60	D4? – no host league yet	Stafford, VA
12s70	D1 – tbd	Okeeheelee, FL
13s	D7 – Northern Fairfax County	Jackson, TN
14s	D9 – Winchester	Jackson, TN
13-158	D6 – Springfield	Greenville, NC
16-18s	D8? – D4 not available on new date	Stafford, VA

John DeYoung has sent email messages (on 9Sep19 and 17Sep19) to baseball District Commissioners with updated information on 2020 State baseball tournament hosts and a request for information on: 1) host league name, 2) name of field(s), 3) tournament director (or other contact), 4) phone number(s), and 5) email addresses, noting that early availability of this information assists with planning for preparation and emailing of tournament contracts, distributing MTIP questionnaires, scheduling of the Tournament Director Training Workshop, and assigning tournament officials.

If host leagues names are reported soon, the contracts can be prepared and ready to send to the host leagues in January 2020.

## 2020 Southeast Regional Baseball Tournaments in Virginia

There will be four Southeast Regional baseball tournaments in Virginia:

Rookies	New Kent	14Jul20
11s70	Stafford	14Jul20
12s60	Stafford	14Jul20
16-18s	Stafford	14Jul20

#### 2020 World Series in Virginia

The 14-Year-olds World Series will be held in Glen Allen starting on 11Aug20. The State champion goes to the World Series and the State runner-up goes to the Southeast Regional in Jackson, TN.

## 2020 State Softball Tournaments and Regional Qualifier hosts

The softball hosts will be decided at the 2020 State Spring Meeting. Paul has identified six potential hosts (Glen Allen, Rockville, Deep Creek, Manassas, Peachtree, and Summit Point).

# **Buddy Ball Plans for 2020**

Don Gowen will coordinate with leagues interested in hosting a Buddy Ball game(s).

## **VBRUA** Compensation Schedule for 2020

# **MOTION**

The following umpire fee schedule was proposed to be used for all 2020 State tournaments with scheduling only two umpires per game for all age groups.

Baseball	
Rookie	\$55.00
9s, 10s, 11s60, 12s60	\$60.00
11s70, 12s70	\$65.00
13–18	\$80.00
Softball	
8U	\$55.00
10U–12U	\$60.00
14U–18U	\$80.00

The Motion for the fee schedule change passed unanimously.

### **Review of 2019 Grant Applications**

Pioneer was the only league that applied for a grant (for Quickball) by the September 1 deadline. Paul reminded all the District Commissioners again of the deadline date and that several email reminders were sent out in late July and August for leagues to apply for a grant.

### 2019 Babe Ruth Southeast Region Hall of Fame Inductees

Paul reported that Virginia had two members selected as inductees to the Babe Ruth Southeast Region Hall of Fame—Mary Clarke (Baseball Mary) of Manassas and Lionel (Rabbit) Moomau of Greenville and District 4.

## Scheduled Games Played Against Teams from Other Babe Ruth Leagues

Several District Commissioners reported that they did not have any issues with teams playing interlocking games between two leagues. The real question was regarding one Babe Ruth team made up of multiple players from different league teams (not on a separate roster) playing against another league team that consisted of just one rostered team of players. The District Commissioners had no issue with this arrangement especially if it came to the games played requirement for one of the teams involved.

# **USA Quickball Status**

A handout explaining the Quickball program and fee options was passed out to the group. Paul mentioned that there is a new 6U Babe Ruth Quickball Division. There are two models for a league to get Quickball: 1) Babe Ruth charges a registration fee and the league gets the Quickball equipment, or 2) A league pays a \$699 fee and does not pay a registration fee. Glen Allen used the Quickball program for their spring season. Curtis Moore reported positive feedback.

## Donation to the Babe Ruth Alumni Association

Paul Link suggested that the Board authorize a \$300 contribution to the Babe Ruth Alumni Association in memory of Mary Clarke (Greater Manassas Baseball League), John Lesch (Northern Fairfax County 16-18 BRL), and Patrick Wickline (Herndon-Reston Cal Ripken League).

The Board voted in favor of this suggestion.

# **Updated Southeast Region Hot Weather Policy for 2020**

John DeYoung reviewed the revised NOAA-NWS Heat Index Chart and reported that the maximum heat index now allowed to continue play is 102. A new heat index chart was posted on the State website on September 21, 2019. The Southeast Region recommends use of the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool App (updated in August 2016).

### Washington Nationals 2019 Champions Day

This was the sixth year that the Washington Nationals hosted State 12-Year-olds championship teams at one of its games. The winning players really enjoyed the experience, according to all the parents and State officials who attended. The State saved money this year by not paying for the parents' tickets to attend this event.

[It was learned after the meeting that four Virginia Babe Ruth volunteers were among the Team UP Volunteers of the Year honored before the Washington Nationals game on August 16. In a pre-game ceremony, the Nationals recognized Shawn Boynton (Northern Fairfax County 13-15 Babe Ruth League), Phil Juliano (Arlington Senior Babe Ruth League), and Eric Olson (Pioneer

Cal Ripken League) and paid tribute to John Lesch (Chantilly Little League and Northern Fairfax County 16-18 Babe Ruth League), who passed away earlier this year. Team UP, the Washington Nationals Youth Baseball Uniform Program launched in 2015, has since been expanded with support from the Inova Health System to include Cal Ripken and Babe Ruth leagues in northern Virginia. The program currently has 24 member leagues and provides roughly 25,000 uniforms to those leagues every year.]

# **General Group Discussion**

The discussion centered on possible rule changes for 2020 in regard to coaches' uniforms and league boundaries.

# **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Prepared by Phillip Larcomb, Secretary-Treasurer