



General Chair Report

2019 Spring House of Delegates Meeting

May 11th, 2019

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Thank you!

For those of you unfamiliar with my past Officials Chair reports, there was always the same section at the beginning of each report as a reminder that the topic was important and needed to be done. That tradition will be carried on here, in the 'Thank You!' section of each of my reports to the House of Delegates. It's not that I'm being lazy, it's just something that needs to be said over and over because it's the truth.

Though the faces and the names may change each year, the first thing that I'd like to do is to thank the countless volunteers in Niagara, such as Officials, Meet Directors, backup Timers, Club Board members, Concessions staff, and any number of other people who donate their time and efforts to fill the roles and responsibilities that allow this great sport to function and be enjoyed by our athletes. You may not hear it much, but your efforts are appreciated more than you can imagine because, without you, much of what happens within Niagara would not.

I would, also, like to thank the members of the Niagara Board of Directors (who are, also, volunteers in their roles and do most of the work) for all of their efforts in trying to update and improve how the Board and LSC conducts itself, responds to our membership, and works to challenge and protect our athlete members. There is a lot of work being done at the LSC level to position Niagara well for the future, so kudos to you!

Special thanks in this edition go out to former longtime Niagara Registrar and previous General Chair Jim Bowen for his efforts in converting Niagara's By Laws into the new USA Swimming mandated By Law template and to Anita Pelletier for reviewing them to ensure compliance with New York State non-profit law.

State of the LSC

Although a relatively uneventful year, there were a couple of challenging issues this past year, one being the implementation of the 12 & Under Technical Suit Ban immediately following the Niagara Short Course Championship meet. There was significant confusion over what suits would or would not be allowed in competition from, both, within and outside of the LSC as information about suit construction and materials was not readily available from suit manufacturers and vendors. The Board ended up approving a modification to the ban language that was in line with other LSCs in the Eastern Zone and across the country that alleviated much of the confusion and we got through the two Speedo Sectional and Zone Age Group Championship meets with few, if any, issues. Now that the growing pains are past, we should be in good shape heading into September 2020 when the full USA Swimming ban is set to begin.

On a positive note, a taskforce has been working with a consultant to build and roll out an Athlete Wellness program for the LSC. The gist of this program is that growing up these days is hard enough and the added pressures of practice and competition that this sport demands only exacerbates the problem. Mental health has become a hot topic in USA Swimming over the last couple of years, mainly since Allison Schmitt shared her struggles. So, the question became, what can we as an LSC do to help? The task force has been working with Samantha Livingstone to build a program that will provide information, point to available resources, and provide training and education for all members of the LSC. Although the initial focus will be athletes, it will be necessarily expand to include coaches, volunteers and parents so that awareness is universal. From an LSC perspective, this falls squarely into the safety of our athletes (and will become part of our Safe Sport program). From a competitive standpoint, we believe that when our athletes are well equipped to face challenges both within and outside of the pool, they will perform better and their enhanced competitive experience will result in greater retention rates. More information about Samantha and what she brings to the table can be found here:

<https://www.samanthalivingstone.com/>

One of our focuses going forward is to enhance our Age Group programming. There are many ideas on how to do this and we will be doing some research to see what might fit well within the LSC. If you have thoughts on the subject, feel free to send them to me.

2019 – 2020 Budget

The proposed 2019 – 2020 Niagara LSC Budget contains some of the normal reallocating of monies that occurs every year based on what was drawn in the previous budget cycle, but this year's proposal also contains several items that the Board of Directors strongly believes should be funded:

- A greater than 250% increase to Coach Education funding than in previous years. The goals of this expenditure is to have every coach member of Niagara LSC either ASCA or ISCA educated and certified, allow for the traditional attendance at coaching clinics and conferences, and budgeting for the maximum amount of USA Swimming reimbursement for Coach Mentoring. Accordingly, the Coach Mentoring program would be expanded to allow participating coaches the opportunity to visit some of the top programs in the country and bring those ideas and methods back to Niagara.

There are two reason for this effort. The first is that common sense dictates that, to have high performing athletes, we must have experienced and expert coaching. The Board believes that one of the ways that we can get there is to substantially increase the Coach Education budget item. During budget development discussions, one conversation was about funding travel reimbursement for next year's Olympic Trials (June 2020). During that discussion, it was realized that Niagara currently has one athlete that is *close* to having a qualifying time. Granted, not every athlete can qualify for Trials, nor should they, but Niagara not having any qualifiers means that we have to do better.

The second reason is, also, Olympic related, but we're meaning the 'Olympic bump' in membership that we (and USA Swimming in general) see after an Olympic year. Enabling our coaches to become trained, educated, and certified this year best positions them for making the athlete experience better *NEXT* year.

- Transitioning to formal payroll and a paid staff position. USA Swimming has frowned upon our historical 'stipend' model of reimbursing Niagara's Registrar and Treasurer. As such, the Finance Committee is, both, formalizing these relationships as well as moving to bring on a paid staff member. The paid staff member would perform the functions of the Registrar, certain delegated functions of the Admin Vice Chair, as well as other duties and responsibilities. The goal of having a paid staff member is to unload the day-to-day tasks of LSC administrative tasks to the person and allow Board members to think strategically as opposed to operationally. The process of bringing on this staff member is close to completion.

Other than the two budget priorities discussed above, some other expenditures should be mentioned:

The Athlete Committee budget line was doubled with the Senior and Junior Athlete Reps expressing a desire that the increase in funding is used for the Athlete Wellness Initiative.

New budget line item 5702 (Officials Para Training) added at the request of the Disability Chair for Officials to attend Para meets to bring that knowledge back to the LSC.

New budget line item 5751 (Non-BOD Athlete Travel) was created to allocate funds for funding travel to athlete-centric conferences such as the Leadership Summit, She Leads Summit, and others.

With increased expenditures must come increased revenue, and that is reflected in the proposed changes to the Niagara Policies and Procedures Manual posted on the Spring HoD Agenda webpage here. I believe that these changes are necessary in order for Niagara to be in the best possible position to serve all of our membership going forward.