



**ZONE  
DIRECTORS'  
COUNCIL**

**Zone Directors' Council Meeting  
August 27th, 2024 - Minutes**

**8 ET/5 PT- Zoom [Link](#)**

*"Serving as a connecting link in the USA Swimming Community to build awareness and trust through shared communication and education."*

Attendance: Zach Toothman (Co-Chair), Keith Moore (Co-Chair), Gavin Formon, Melissa Hellervik-Bing, Bob Staab, Nicole Caruso, Jerry Adams, Jack Swanson, Jamie Platt, Bruno Darzi, TJ Walsh, Simran Jayasinghe, Joel Shinofield

Guests: Bernadine Dickman, Nate Chessey, Pamela Lowenthal, Tim Husson, Kathleen Prindle

1. Call to Order
  - a. The meeting was called to order at 8:01PM ET.
2. Additions to Agenda
  - a. Bob recommended addition of athletes to onboarding leader list
3. Approval of Consent Agenda **APPROVED**
4. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest **NONE**
5. Approval of July Minutes **APPROVED**
6. Ongoing Business
  - a. **Junior Officials Membership Launch**

The Junior Officials Membership category will be going live this Sunday, September 1<sup>st</sup>. The working group has been working with a national officials committee to get the word out to them and get their help in better implementation. Additionally, there will be 15

minutes dedicated to this topic at the ABM/workshop and a message will be sent to all membership groups (officials, coaches, athletes, parents etc.).

**b. ZDC Legislation Review- Recap & Feedback**

The feedback for the ZDC led Legislation Review Call was mixed. There were generally positive reviews regarding the content covered however the overarching concern was the lack of participation on the call and overall lack of attendance. The event garnered 21 attendees, about 1/3 of which serve on the ZDC, which definitely leaves room for improvement for future renditions of this event. Some potential solutions include starting at a more optimal time of year as many college students were busy and to do this event in conjunction with the Rules & Regulations event in order to increase attendance. The group has decided to wait on making a decision about running the ZDC Legislation Event next year.

**c. ZDC Club Dues Plan Presentation (Ira Klein and Kenneth Chung)  
Feedback:**

There is some concern among the group that people will see certain numbers such as the \$750 for new clubs and immediately reject the idea without looking past the surface level information. One key detail regarding the \$750 charge for new clubs is that there would be exceptions for clubs that are geographically isolated or in areas with economic difficulties. This increased charge would be used to provide guidance for these new clubs. The general opinion was that overall there is a lot of great aspects of this proposal but making sure all delegates are properly informed is essential in order to get them to buy into the idea when it is put up for a vote next month.

When asked about further details on how the money is being spent, Joel presented a more detailed breakdown. Some of the highlights of this were:

- Would help fund 50 visits across the nation (in various ways such as meetings, going to a practice etc.) to offer them guidance and advice
- Could help recognize 52 clubs and provide banners
- App would cost \$10K a month to augment the app
- \$30k for clubs in crisis and would help 4 high profile clubs who are in a period of turmoil by providing someone to assist them for a week.
- Increased funding for home coach stipend for national select / zone select camps
- \$30k for New Club Success to provide in person regional support and also virtual support.

**d. ZDC Meet the Candidates Questions- September 3rd 3 ET/ 12 PT**

The council reviewed questions written by Zone Directors and identified key topics of focus including: Communication, Organizational Change, Swimmer Attrition, Safe Sport, LSC Improvement, Addressing Differing LSC Needs, Why You?, Grassroots. The group's consensus was to have open ended questions to allow candidates to show how they think

and what assets they would bring to the organization. Each candidate will be faced with 6 questions which are asked in a random order and limited to 3 minutes per answer.

## **7. New Business**

### **a. September ZDC Meeting Agenda Plan**

The ZDC Meeting will take place Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, in Denver. The group discussed making this a more report-based meeting rather business meeting to better engage those in attendance and give insight into the work of the council. There is some concern about a considerable number of council members who have conflicts with other committee meetings. One potential suggestion was to have another ZDC Panel as done in previous years to let delegates ask questions about the work of the council. A report on the Boots on Ground Initiative is important to present at this meeting.

### **b. ABM/Workshop Questions / Discussion**

A question was raised regarding zone meeting rooms and their capabilities. Each room will be equipped with a microphone and AV equipment can be provided if needed. WIFI access could be difficult and Joel recommends that any Zones hosting a hybrid summit with virtual attendees reaches out to USA Swimming about to ensure adequate WIFI is in place.

### **c. ZDC Board of Directors Report**

This report will be given in person in September in Denver at the BOD Meeting. The group agreed that the report should mention the ZDC's commitment to acting as a conduit for communication with both the board and down to the LSCs, to best help the organization run efficiently.

### **d. ZDC Onboarding Leaders**

The council requested volunteers for 1-2 Coach Director(s), 1 Non-Coach Director, 1 Athlete Director to serve as mentors for new members this upcoming year. Their role will be to act as point person to catch new members up to speed and answer their questions.

Mentor Volunteers:

Coach Director: Bob Staab (CZ)

Non-Coach Director: Jamie Platt (EZ)

Athlete Director: Zach Toothman (CZ)

### **e. "Boots on The Ground" Roundtable Reports**

Reports were submitted ahead of time and no questions/thoughts from the group at this time. The four topics are Member Requirements, Swimmer Attrition, Zone/Sectional Meets & Operations Communication Conduits.

## **8. Staff Updates**

- a. Joel brought up the idea that the ZDC could offer an independent analysis on creating a better meet schedule. They could provide a neutral view full of diverse perspectives and offer guidance for Senior Development in planning meet schedules.

- b. Small LSCs calls were positive and had good conversations about 3 agenda items including USA Swimming Workshop, Legislation Questions, and Block Party.
- c. A detailed report on membership trends and performance metrics will be coming out soon. In the years 2022 & 2023, there were solid membership numbers but lower retention rates. Some interesting data within this report includes:
  - i. Athletes who returned average 6 meets per year to 1 meet per year of those who have left the sport.
  - ii. The 10 largest clubs in the country barely offer Flex Memberships.
  - iii. Insight from clubs with above average 10&U retention rates
  - iv. Survey data from families who left the sport of swimming (77,000 sent out)
  - v. Block Party Data and how an expanded pilot study will work.
- e. There will be no professional keynote at this year's ABM/Workshop but rather a collective of individuals who talk about how they are enhancing the sport of swimming and how to better the organization as a whole.
- f. There is no decision on future locations of the workshop however at this time, Denver is by far the most cost-effective option.

## **9. Zone Updates**

### **a. Central Zone**

Zone Meets were a success with good participation. Looking at standardization and improving pre meet communication to better enhance the experience for the athletes.

### **b. Southern Zone**

Meets were very successful at end of the season. The Southern Zone Athlete Summit was a huge success and LSCs are invested in making it happen again. Last, the SZ is struggling to find facilities to host 2026 meets, as they bid 2 years in advance

### **c. Western Zone**

One meet at Clovis West and one in Boise. Both meets were well received and generally had good attendance. Western Zone had 54 athletes and 12 staff attend a DEI Camp in Indianapolis and were able to attend a session of Trials, an overall wonderful experience.

### **d. Eastern Zone**

No update at this time.

General consensus was that the same few hosts are only facilities willing to host Zone meets and finding ways to incentivize more facilities is a challenge faced by all zones.

## **10. Adjournment**

The Meeting was adjourned at 9:29PM ET.