

BOTC MINUTES OF JANUARY 4, 2024

Attending: Mary, Tom, Val, Ilene, Lynda, Nancy, Lori, Pam, Lynn, Bob B, Thad, Dave

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

APPROVE NOVEMBER MINUTES - Lynda:

First up on the agenda is to approve the December minutes. Nancy moved that we accept the December meeting minutes. Ilene seconded. Unanimously agreed. The minutes of the December meeting are approved.

BUDGET -Tom

Next on the agenda is the budget. Nice job, Tom. Lynda motioned that we accept the budget as written. Nancy seconded. A discussion followed. Val votes yes, but hopes the club does all it can to limit the deficit as much as possible. Ilene understands that the budget is hypothetical, and has been done in a deficit for the past several years. Tom noted that the budget tends to be a little conservative on the income side. Expenses come first, then income comes last once all the entries have been received. Of course, we don't know in advance just how many entries we'll get. In the past, the gap tends to lessen once we're able to get the whole picture, and Tom gave several examples. This will be the second year in which we have a serious level of competition from other trials in Albany, Connecticut and Massachusetts on the same weekends. We expect to lose some entries, so this year may well be the deciding year to determine whether we can compete against those other trials. As usual, changes happen, and it's a bit of an experiment and trial and error. Discussion continued on trial expenses – judges, travel, hotels, meals, etc. Thad asked about show fees. Pam noted some judges' fees of \$200 per day, which is a pittance for the amount of work they do. Val noted that some judges don't charge and others want their fee donated to their chosen organization. Thad noted that in some organizations, they'd get a stipend or room, meals and travel expenses, but not both, so he was just checking to see if there's a possible area to save some money. Approved by Val; Second by Nancy. Mary abstained noting she missed the discussion and Thad also abstained.

ELECTION -Lynda

Lynda reviewed the election of officers as proposed:

Mary Willmuth for President, Nancy Suarez for Vice President, Diane Sullivan as Secretary, Tom O'Brien as Treasurer, Pam Loeb as Training Director, and Lynn Steinhoff member at large.

A discussion followed. Val noted that the Secretary generally casts one ballot for the slate of officers as presented, followed by a second, and then a discussion and/or a nomination from the floor. Tom offered to let someone step up as Treasurer. All agreed that Tom keep the position with our gratitude. So, as Secretary, Val cast a ballot that we elect the officers as presented by the nominating committee for 2024. Seconded by Lori. All in favor.

So, at this time, the new officers take over the meeting. Welcome Mary and all the new officers. Diane was absent, but has been in contact with Mary, Val, and Bob.

Mary confirmed a quorum was present, and thanked those stepping down who have served BOTC so well. Val and Robert and Lynda, thank you! Mary also thanked those who agreed to step up so that we have a new Board formed. Thank you all, since we can't do anything without you. She thinks we have a terrific new Board, even though several are new. We appreciate former board members being there to help us out.

AUDIT - Tom

Val noted that we need to form an audit committee, which is due in March. Mary asked about the procedure and how it usually gets done. Tom explained. It's usually been one board member and one or two non-board members volunteer and Tom gets them the books, and they audit the books. Last year we did it electronically and took a couple of nights, but that also depends on comfort level with numbers and financial statements. Tom is more than happy to help those with less experience either remotely or in person. Tom provides printouts, PDFs, from our accounting software along with monthly financial statements and samples of checking account statements, etc. so that they would be able to just have it on their computer screens. We didn't have to exchange a lot of paper and that seemed to work out. But if people would prefer to have paper, what I would do is print the same material, put it in a

notebook, and provide it to folks that way. He expects to be able to have it ready to turn over in a week or two. Mary thanked Tom for the explanation. Discussion on getting members for the audit committee. Nancy volunteered as the board member to chair the audit committee. Lynn will send an email to the membership in the next week to ask for two more non-board volunteers, noting the March deadline and that Nancy is the chair of the audit committee, and asking about experience reviewing financial data and budgets, and that it can be done remotely. Mary suggested getting the email out and then Nancy can discuss options with the volunteer members.

DATABASE – Bob B

Mary requested Val send items directly to the new Secretary and that they don't need to go through her. Once we have a final membership listing, it will be sent to the membership. Mary asked Bob to see if he could make the list easier to update as members drop off and new members add on. Mary asked Val to send him a current list so he could work on it. Bob noted that Tom's already done quite a bit of work listing the areas where members are active – obedience, rally, agility, etc. Mary would like Bob to include that information as well, and hoping we could get it all in a contact database of some sort. Bob agreed that he was thinking the same thing. Mary thanked Bob for taking on the project, requesting he keep it simple so all of us could potentially use it. Bob agreed and thought of using something like Google Docs, or some other easy-to-manipulate database, as a central repository for this information. Mary would also like to see the New Members Application included so that it can be easily updated as Secretaries or other information changes. Val's been trying to make that happen, but if we could facilitate it that would be great. Diane's information needs to go on that. Mary asked everyone to be succinct in their presentations now, since it was getting late.

TRACKING – Ilene and Lynda

Val is working on the April test application. We kind of threw a little ball at her here and we're trying to add three TDs to that test to make it three TDs and three TDXs. Because we haven't done that before, there's a whole new line of paperwork that has to be filed with AKC, which she's working through at this time. Ilene's working on updating the premium, which should be out by mid-January, but it all depends on when we can get the application into AKC in the proper form they want. Ilene noted another ball that's going to come up for us to deal with is we're hiring a judge this year, because I don't know if I'm going to be well enough in order to do the judging for the April test. So, we're planning ahead and being proactive. And in the meantime, because we canceled last year's May test because I was in the hospital again, AKC dropped the whole thing. So now we have to reapply for that test. So, we're working on it. Janine and Val are being very patient with us trying to get all this information rounded up for them. Mary thanked Ilene & Lynda and noted that tracking is a lovely third branch to BOTC's training interests. Ilene added that we've got several people that have contacted us that are interested in starting their dogs in tracking. If all goes well and we get a good summer or spring this year, we would really look forward to hearing from you and to add to our agenda that we'll do a tracking workshop again. Like a beginner tracking workshop for those that want to start, but it's going to depend on the weather and how well I am, in order to get that ball rolling. Lynda noted it would be half classroom and half actually working with your dog. We'll keep you posted.

OBEDIENCE AND RALLY – Pam

Pam noted that she has spent the last several months trying to sign up judges for 2024. She only needed two and it shouldn't be that hard, but some judges are now booking out to '26 and '27. She started with geographically desirable people, but also very strongly felt that we've used the same judges over and over again in recent years, and it's time to branch out a little bit. So, Nancy Withers was the first one to say yes, and Pam hoped that she would because she had sent a message through Brian Sorotkin last year that she had said, "Oh, if Burlington wants me to come back, I'd love to come back for them." And then I was stuck for a second one for a little while, and a name kept coming up, so I hired a judge from Florida. Her name is Leslie Pennell. I have heard nothing but wonderful things about her from exhibitors and from other judges. When I mentioned that Nancy Withers was already hired in my email to Leslie, she said, "I love working with Nancy!" So, I feel good that we're going to have a positive team of judges. Pam pointed out that both judges do obedience and rally, and we'll work out who judges what. Pam had also put out some requests to see what contracts that others use for judges. Green Mountain Dog Club shared their contract which seems very complete, so Pam amended that for our purposes and it has gone to both judges. Pam's hoping these judges will draw lots of entries because we haven't seen these judges up here in a while or ever. Pam is scheduling another planning committee meeting, probably next month, to talk about moving ahead and hiring judges for '25 and '26, at least to get people lined up because it's that difficult. In all of our dog sports, our judges don't seem to be getting younger and we don't seem to be replacing them at the rate that we are losing them. So, it

gets harder and harder. Mary thanked Pam noting that things seem to be moving along nicely and thanked Deb for helping too

CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Mary opened the discussion by asking why we're looking to make a charitable contribution when finances seem tight and we ask our membership to participate in fundraising for both agility and obedience. A discussion followed. Val agreed, but felt it was part of our club's mission statement that we strive to do. Val feels it could be dropped for a couple of years and if we end up with a good year with extra funds, we could donate at that time, or even looking at the end of 2024 to see where we're at then. The contribution is not connected with the club's 501(c) status. Val noted that AKC wants clubs to reach out to the community, and this was a way for us to do that. Mary would like the club to take a break until the end of 2024 and review. Ilene has reminded us many times that we can't keep losing money. Tom agreed reviewing on an annual basis is a good way to go. Ilene noted she did not contact the organization, because she was in the hospital most of December. Ilene always felt it was part of the dog club's contribution to the canine world. We did a lot more for the community in the past. We're in existence, but Ilene feels we're not doing anything for the community, except putting on events, and providing a place to train. So, Ilene is okay with a temporary deferral, and not a cancellation.

Tom motioned that we defer on making any charitable contributions until at least the end of 2024 when we can assess our financial situation. Bob seconded. All unanimously agreed.

VERMONT FEDERATION OF DOG CLUBS – Mary McFawn, Pam

Mary noted that Mary McFawn was absent, so Pam represented her, since she represents the club for the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs. Pam noted that we had an end of year annual meeting recently. There is a bill that we've been working on that now has a bill number. We don't have all the details yet and will send out an email from the Federation once we know more. I believe it is about establishing an animal welfare-like board at state level. We were able to cobble together a payment to the lobbyists this year, although that's an issue. Vermont Federation, for those who don't know, is a membership of just dog clubs here in the state of Vermont. Right now, our membership is six clubs. So, with dues of like \$50 a club, clearly we don't have a lot of money to pay a lobbyist. And that is our primary thing that we do. So, we're working on trying to figure out how to make sure there's funds coming in for that. Our lobbyist, Mike Covey, has been a great contact for us. He's working very closely with Stacey Ober, who is our AKC legislative liaison. And the two of them both attend our meetings for the Vermont Federation sometimes and keep us all apprised. On a separate note, that's not really the Vermont Federation thing, but the state of New Hampshire has a bill right now that is going to be opposed to breeders who breed deformed dogs or things to that effect. Right now, they're starting by going after brachycephalic breeds. So, any of the flat face breeds, the Bulldogs, Frenchies, Brussels Griffons, Pugs and even Boxers and Rottweilers are considered Brachycephalic. They're considering that confirmation to be deformed by definition. Pam plans to go to New Hampshire on the 16th and represent the American Brussels Griffon Association. Legislators don't want to hear from people who are not constituents, but if I represent a national organization, that gives me a foot in the door to go and testify. So that's the kind of stuff that the Vermont Federation does. It's the animal welfare, the anti-government bad anti-dog stuff. We represent the club for that. So, if there's any issues that you hear coming about that are canine legislation, let us know. Keep us posted because we all need an ear to the ground. Also, if you have an opportunity to get to know your legislator at any level, whether it's your local town or county or state legislators - get to be their friend when you don't need them so that when we do need them, we can call. HSUS has lobbyists in the state house at least several days a week, and we're only there when we need them, so it helps to be friends with our legislators. Mary thanked Pam for representing us.

CANINE COLLABORATIVE – Pam

Pam acknowledged that she has not yet been to any of their meetings yet, although a meeting is coming up soon on Zoom. There's a group of people in the middle of the state that are trying to create a place to train dogs that would be open to everybody, more or less. It sounds like they're trying to find a location that they can rent and have a board of directors oversee and then make it available to dog trainers, clubs, for events, for a number of different things. I believe they're talking to a variety of people to get their experience. I suggested they talk to Meryl Winnie at Working Dogs in Amsterdam because she just built a beautiful building that she's getting ready to be able to have available for training and other things. I've shared some other names of people in the area that have tried to do that kind of thing. I will have more information after I actually attend a meeting. A discussion followed. Bob suggested to reach out to any banks or towns and ask if they have any distressed properties that they'd be willing to

lease out, because that's usually something that the banks like to do. Also, there's an organization called SniffSpot on an app where you can go and rent out their member's backyards or spaces that are fenced in. You can rent it for as much time as you need to rent it. Pam thinks the collaborative is searching for a facility. Bob said if they had that facility, part of paying for that facility could be signing up with SniffSpot. Pam thought that might be a big liability for a start-up, but will write notes on the suggestions and ask them at their next meeting.

FACEBOOK FUNDRAISING – Pam

Pam spoke with a woman named Kathy who does this and saw her Facebook link and thought it was a really neat little group with 5,000 followers. Pam asked what a club would need to do. She said just give me your treasurer's name and contact information and the name of your club and we're good to go. Pam got the ok from Tom to share his information, but when she got back in touch with Kathy, she was told no, they don't do fundraising for obedience clubs. So that ended that. But the concept is really interesting because it opens up fundraising beyond local people and asking the same pool of people for funds all the time. Pam is just at a loss as to how to go about setting up online fundraising. So, if anyone knows how to go about it or hears of anything like that as an opportunity, let us know. If you have some high-end raffle items that dog people want for the club to raffle off, like the wheeled trolleys, grooming table suitcase, forced air dryers, etc, let us know. Or if you see online groups that would accept us, let's jump on it. Pam thanked Lynda and Nancy for their raffle contributions at the obedience trial. Pam asks us to please share our thoughts on possible fundraising ideas.

NEXT MEETING – Mary

Mary began the discussion on a February meeting, which traditionally is skipped. She supports skipping it unless anybody thinks we absolutely can't. Val is fine with skipping it. The only question is that people were supposed to be paid by tonight before voting, but they have till March before they actually fall off the membership. Val thought that if Tom can get that information to Diane, who is still a paid member in good standing, we'd know that information for the March meeting. Mary suggested that Diane get that information and puts together a follow-up email to those people we haven't heard from, just inviting them to stay members, and that it's important for the club. Val's hoping to avoid getting to the March meeting with members who just forgot to pay their dues and they'd be lapsed and need to go through the whole application process again. Dave and Lori will get their dues mailed directly to Tom. Mary asked Tom to provide Diane with a list of members who haven't paid their dues so she can send an email requesting them to renew. Mary asked Val to let Diane know this and that Bob will be sending her the recording for the minutes. Val has not been taking minutes tonight, but will give Diane a heads-up. Mary asked if everyone was comfortable with skipping a February meeting. Ilene noted she has no problem skipping February, which we have traditionally skipped, but wanted to be sure the auditors were working on the report due in March. Mary is leaving that in Nancy's very capable hands to make sure that happens, but reminded her to ask for any help she needs. No objections were made to skipping the February meeting. Our next meeting is in March.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business. Mary asked for any additional comments. Ilene thanked BOTC for the beautiful flowers sent to her after she returned home from the hospital the second time on December 23rd. It was a nice Christmas present for me. Thank you all for your kind thoughts.

Mary commented that our thoughts are still with you Ilene. We're hoping things settle for you and you get to feeling better.

Mary motioned to adjourn the meeting. Tom seconded as well as Nancy and Pam. Unanimously agreed. Mary noted that she can generally be reached on her email or by text should you need to reach her and please feel free to do so. Thank you all for being here tonight, for participating and for your work. See you in March. The meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Sullivan, Secretary