

Draft minutes of the 64th Annual General Meeting held 13 April 2024 at 13:00

Present: 46 members, including (in order of registration):

EXCO — Mark Kenyon, Michele Alexander, Beverley Hargrove, Hilary Nick, Brian Paxton, Shirley Phillips

Members— Erica Zimet, Machele Shapiro, Jocelyn Ashberg, Jan van Dijken, Stephen McBride, Glen Holman, Brian Pincus, Carol Stanton, Kate Tipper, Duncan Keet, Nita Abel, Shirley Karon, Harold Bernstein, Ann Murray, Michele Alexander, Robyn di Biaggi, Lynette Marx, Eric Marx, Arline Wolffe, Peter Terblanche, David Beinart, Barry Gunton, Wayne Taylor, Denise Sive, Andrew Cruise, Kitty Cruise, Tim Cope, Di Cope, Jill Rabie, Anne Dematteis, Hazel Scalabrino, June Price, Merle Furman, Joan Mendelsohn, Judy Mazor, Inez Yutar, Paul Reynolds, Merle Saxe, Joe Rozowsky, Shulamit Rozowsky, Doris Danilewitz, Shelley Carp

Apologies — Joyce Hessen, Shirley Kaminer, Mel Kempe, Ian Holdsworth, Michael Alexander, Wendy Praetorius

1. Welcome and adoption of previous minutes

Members were welcomed to the meeting by the President, Mark Kenyon, who moved for the adoption of the previous AGM minutes: Harold Bernstein (proposed), Shirley Phillips (seconded). Duncan Keet noted that for the two previous AGMs he had tabled amendments to the minutes which had been ignored.

2. President's Report

Mark Kenyon read out his report and there were no questions arising.

3. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Hilary Nick (HN), invited Brian Paxton (BP) to speak to the financial statements. He confirmed that the current finances were secure but noted declining numbers and advancing age of the bridge population of the Western Cape and consequences thereof. If the WCBU was unable to run at a profit, then the invested funds could be drawn upon to keep bridge going. He also considered the possibility that the number of members might become unviable, in which event the decision might be to divide the fund amongst the remaining members. Eric Marx advised the division of funds amongst the members would be unconstitutional. BP emphasised that the interest earned on invested capital was used to underwrite the now substantial costs of keeping the Bridge Centre open. Erica Zimet recommended that fundraising be undertaken to support the top players to compete internationally and was advised that this had been the ongoing for some time — specifically, four Western Cape players received funding to play in Morocco in 2022.

Duncan Keet was satisfied that the financial reporting was correct but not happy that various concerns he had raised had been ignored. HN undertook to action any such queries that were received.

The Treasurer's Report was adopted on a proposal by Peter Terblanche, seconded by Michele Alexander.

4. Election of WCBU Committee Members for 2024/25

Mark Kenyon proposed that this election be postponed until the contentious issues surrounding proxy votes were resolved. He clarified that at fairly short notice a decision had been made not to accept proxies because of widely reported manipulation of these votes, with a communication being circulated to that effect on 9 April. To give out of town members a chance to cast their vote, a majority of the EXCO decided that an electronic voting system would give all members the choice of how many and which candidates they voted for. The electronic ballot attracted 145 responses — 14 of which votes were eliminated because of irregularities, eg double voting, ineligibility.

Jocelyn Ashberg enquired why the EXCO's decision making about proxies was so ill-planned. MK confirmed that once the proxy votes were being actively solicited, several legal experts had advised that

proxies which were not specific in nature were not legal, others disagreed. In addition, several members reported witnessing coercive acquisition of proxies. BH noted that since the Constitution allows resolutions to be raised at an AGM, a proxy cannot be specific. Further, until the nominations came in (some just before deadline), it was not obvious that an election would be necessary. Notwithstanding their purported invalidity, 74 unverifiable proxies were handed in to the office just before the deadline, to add to the 56 verified proxies that had been lodged electronically in good time.

Tim Cope noted that para 7.4 of the WCBU Constitution allowed for proxy votes and not for electronic votes. He did not agree that the EXCO's powers under that section to determine the process and timing of proxy votes encompassed the cancellation of proxies in their entirety. Since the holding of an electronic vote was not mentioned in the Constitution, he considered the votes obtained through this method to be invalid [although he noted that the concept was not without merit for future implementation]. He then proposed a resolution that only members present or by proxy should be allowed to vote in the election. This was seconded by Andrew Cruise.

Machelle Shapiro and Kitty Cruise vehemently denied allegations that coercion had been used to obtain proxy votes, whilst Carol Stanton noted that that there appeared to have been coercion and bullying from all sides, also that an unknown number of members might have added their proxy votes had they not been told that these would not be considered. BH suggested a proposal that the issue of the electronic vote be separated from the resolution, and questioning whether proxies should be allowed under such compromised circumstances. Despite some support for this proposal, Andrew Cruise and Tim Cope, amongst others, demanded a vote on the first resolution.

Before a vote was taken, Eric Marx repeated his suggestion that the voting process should elect 10 committee members, who should then co-opt the additional 5 nominees. This was vociferously agreed to be in contravention of the Constitution, as was the view of the EXCO to his original suggestion.

By show of hands, 36 members voted in favour of all 130 existing proxies (vetted or not) being included in the election process and the 131 electronic votes being disallowed. A vote for the election of the new committee went ahead on prepared ballot papers and the meeting was suspended for the count, which was undertaken by BH and EM.

The new committee was announced as: Michele Alexander, Hilary Nick, Jocelyn Ashberg, Shirley Phillips, Glen Holman, Shirley Kaminer, Eric Marx, Adrian Mauerberger, Kitty Cruise and Machelle Shapiro.

The meeting ended at approximately 14.30.

Draft minutes prepared by BH