

## **Minutes**

### **Minnesota American Legion Baseball Committee**

#### **Fall Meeting**

**6:30 p.m. Sept. 18, 2024**

**Location: virtual, via Zoom**

Present were Director Randy Schaub, Vice Director Jeff Miller, District 4 Director Gail Kalata, District 5 Director Michael Rothstein, District 6 Director Wes Thompson, District 7 Director Joe Dollerschell, District 9 Director Mike Arvidson, Member Emeritus Al Davis and Secretary Tim Engstrom. Absent were Vice Director Brandon Raymo, Assistant to the Director Jim Peck, District 1 Director Scott McCready, District 2 Director Vern Kitzberger, District 3 Director Bruce Young, District 8 Director Tom Coombe and District 10 Director Seth Pugh.

Guests present were Div I. Jr. Chairman Jack Strong, Div. I Jr. State Tournament host representative Mark Scott of Bloomington Legion Baseball and American Legion member Joe Bares of Jordan Post 3.

Schaub called the meeting to order and led the committee in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Engstrom called for a motion to name a director. Miller nominated Schaub for director. Motion carried.

Miller and Davis reported on attending the National American Legion Baseball Committee meeting in Shelby, N.C. Miller said Milbank, S.D., will host a 100-year celebration of American Legion Baseball for regional teams July 11-13. (Milbank is the birthplace of Legion Baseball.) The celebration tournament would need a Class B (Div. II) team from Minnesota. Miller favors sending Sleepy Eye because it is the Div. II state champ. The team manager said he is interested. National will pay costs and treat it like a little World Series with a celebration event the night before the tournament starts. National American Legion Baseball Director Steve Cloud had asked if departments would pay for transportation to and from Milbank.

Davis described how national wants it to be a celebration equivalent to the American Legion World Series.

McCready and Young joined the meeting.

Schaub said he feels the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Committee should send Sleepy Eye on a coach bus. Miller agreed, adding that if Sleepy Eye can't make it, then Glenwood-Lowry would be asked.

Miller moved for Minnesota American Legion Baseball to wholly pay for the cost of a bus for whomever is selected to go to the centennial tournament in Milbank, S.D. McCready seconded. Motion carried.

On a potential fee increase, Schaub said the committee is not going to bring it up for 2025. It's off the table.

Strong and Scott reported on the 2024 Div. I Jr. State Tournament in Bloomington. Strong said Bloomington did a great job. There was rain the first day, but everything went smooth. Scott also mentioned the rain and said Tony Oliva threw out the first pitch. They streamed games through GameChanger. He shared expenses and revenues (see attached sheet) and said the tournament profited by \$1,298.

Kitzberger joined the meeting.

Engstrom encouraged Scott to speak about contracts. Scott said he'd like to see contracts be consistent. Schaub agreed, asked him if he'd be willing to host again.

Scott said yes if the mileage radius for lodging could be dropped to 60, not 50, to reduce expenses. He also proposed not having the host team in the tournament. He asked for providing additional money or removing the meal cost for players. Strong said he feels hosts should make more than \$1,200 bucks.

Miller commended Scott, then said hotel costs is part of the deal when hosting state tournaments. Moorhead wants to host. Bemidji shows interest, then again complimented Scott for his hard work. Kalata added she is not aware of what is in the D1Jr contract but hosts deserve to know what they are facing. Scott asked if any program has stepped up to host in 2025. Schaub said no one yet. Scott said the metro lacks the volunteers that Greater Minnesota possesses and said it is tough to get sponsors when so many Legion Baseball tournaments are happening in the Twin Cities at once. Schaub noted that metro hotels won't give favorable rates like hotels do in rural areas of the state for youth programs. He also said the 50-mile radius is a national rule. Discussion ensued and report concluded.

Scott left. Schaub noted Div. I Sr. State Tournament host Scott Ross of OMGAA will not be present to make a report.

Miller proposed having an umpire-in-chief. He said he spoke with Jody Moeller of Nebraska Legion Baseball, who mentioned Nebraska has an umpire-in-chief. If a player or coach is ejected, they get shown the consequences. Miller put forth Eric Guler of Pelican Rapids as a candidate.

Peck joined the meeting.

Kalata noted the rulebook states if there are ejections during the tournament, the person ejected, whether player or coach, they are considered ejected for the duration of the tournament, subject to the decision of the tournament director. Miller said his question regards the regular season, where consequences seem arbitrary, not standard. "There is no central place to go." He said an ump might be better-equipped than a district director. Discussion ensued.

Davis said if the decisions are left to district directors, the state ends up with 10 different rules. With an umpire-in-chief, the rules are uniform, like Nebraska. McCready said umpers are looking for support. Engstrom noted Guler has worked the Central Plains Regional Tournament. Miller said he has done so for 5 years. Further discussion ensued on pay or volunteer. Schaub tabled the matter to Saturday, Sept. 21.

Raymo joined.

Peck was having problems with Zoom but remained in the meeting at times.

Schaub called for a break.

McCready shared his screen and showed photos of the teams, color guard, fans, players at the Div. II Jr. State Tournament in St. Charles. He mentioned a baseball player who had a heart transplant in January who threw the first pitch and buddies swarmed him, an emotional moment for the community. He showed new decks, shots of the cloudy weather (but not rainy). His finances (see sheet) showed income of \$52,427, expenses \$30,225, with profit of \$22,202. He described "tons of sponsors" as well as trades and discounts.

Raymo said the tournament couldn't have had better weather. Schaub said he hopes to hear back from Arlington about hosting. The committee lacks a 2026 Div. II Sr. host. He asked McCready, who said he might have an answer on Saturday. Miller said Ely is set for 2025, Le Sueur in 2027. Discussion ensued about locations for 2026.

Levy Fry of St. Michael was on the conference. St. Michael is a possible host for the 2025 Div. I Sr. State Tournament. He said he spoke with Bruce Young about starting the Div. I on Tuesday and ending it on Saturday. He said he has two fields in St. Michael, and if they use four fields, the other two would be Maple Grove and Buffalo. He encouraged the committee to decide soon its format, pool or bracket. Fry talked about lodging in Albertville and Rogers. He is seeking sponsors. Schaub said he anticipates problems finding a banquet space for 500 people, and Fry agreed. Kalata asked about tournament headquarters, and Fry said the city has a warming house that is a trailer, and they can set up a portable Wi-Fi hotspot. Main field, he said, is Lower Rec. Peck asked about a speaker, and Fry mentioned a local man. Schaub she the committee will discuss format on Saturday and let Fry know. Engstrom noted the tournament has not been officially awarded. Young moved to award St. Michael the Div. I Sr. State Tournament for 2025. Raymo seconded. Motion carried.

Schaub brought the conversation back to the centennial celebration. Miller stopped him to note that Nebraska does not pay its ump in chief, and he is the head of the umpire subcommittee. Miller then returned to the centennial, stating national wants departments to figure out a week to celebrate the centennial, to have a media blitz and special events. Emblem Sales will have special patches and other goods for it. "I don't think any travel club can even announce 10 years." Miller felt it ought to happen during the Gopher Classic. Discussion ensued. Arvidson motioned to have July 7-13 be Centennial Week. Miller seconded. Motion carried.

Schaub said people prefer in-person meetings and wanted to talk on Saturday about doing the two-day Fall Meeting on Saturday-Sunday. (Background: It used to be Friday-Saturday, which was difficult because of Friday night sports. Lately, it's been Wednesday on Zoom, then in-person on Saturday.) Engstrom proposed shooting for last weekend in September.

Peck mentioned he would like to get answers for 2026 and 27 for the Div. I host. He spoke to Moorhead and Sartell, Perham and Excelsior.

Davis said he got himself elected department treasurer and will be at the Harvest Rally at Fridley Post 303 on Saturday, Sept. 21, instead of the baseball meeting at Chanhassen Post 580. He asked that Bird Island-Olivia multisport legend Barry Wohler be considered for Graduate of the Year.

Strong asked about a date for the spring meeting and asked about the 2025 Div.I Jr. host. Engstrom mentioned the contract matter he brought up with the Div. I Jr State Tournament it happened without a signed contract, which causes confusion for both sides. He said he would call Strong about finding hosts and how contracting works.

A motion was made to recess, and motion was approved.

**9 a.m. Sept. 21, 2024**

**Location: Chanhassen Post 580**

The committee meeting reconvened in person on Saturday, Sept. 21, at Chanhassen Post 580, with all committee members present except Pugh and Davis. OMGAA's Scott Ross was in attendance as a guest. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Ross reported on the Div. I Sr. State Tournament, saying he had a committee soliciting donations that stopped selling ads and could have sold more ads. They used Normanin but also had opportunities to make more money on their own. He said Post 172 had some challenges, such as a cook quitting and having to use a caterer instead. He said he will send revenue and expenses later. He said OMGAA is working with the city to get another artificial turf ballfield at Gleason Park. Ross said if he gets a second field Maple Grove could host again. It worked well with have partners in Osseo, St. Michael and Delano. Many thanked him for his work. Raymo asked what could the committee do better. Ross said challenges are the nature of the beast but suggested expediting getting teams for the programs. He said he could have delegated more work now that he knows more. Discussion was had on background checks, HQ, fields, staffing.

Kitzberger moved to approve mileage at 50 cents a mile. Peck seconded. Motion carried.

Ross left. Robert Weber of Burnsville entered.

Weber reported on the new Div. I-A State Tournament, giving the financials (attached) and concluding the tournament cleared \$24,800, with sponsorships being the biggest part of the equation. Discussion ensued. Weber left after his report.

Bruce Barron was present for a report on the American Legion Prospect Series. It started five years ago, went from 16 players to 130, from Red Haddox Field to University of Northwestern's Reynolds Field. Rosetown Post 542 couldn't provide a color guard. Tourney offered wearables to players, and they liked them. Revenue has been in 4,000 to 5,000 area. State committee provides \$2,000. He would like \$2,500. He talked about ties to the Minnesota Twins. He encouraged Legion Baseball to offer fall ball, said there is an interest. Discussion ensued.

Thompson moved to accept the minutes of the 2024 Spring Meeting held at Buffalo Post 270. Peck seconded. Motion carried.

Schaub said he inadvertently permitted more money to flow to the Div. I-A State Tournament than he should have and felt bad for overpromising. He said he favors delaying expansion of Div. I-A until "we can get more organized."

Young pointed out finances going to Burnsville and Rosemount. Miller said he worries that, if I-A becomes a third division statewide, then Div. I Sr. becomes a metro tournament. Discussion ensued among members on substate travel, fan attendance, school enrollment and teams that don't play Legion Baseball because of a lack of postseason advancement. Kitzberger said teams ask why do metro area teams get the Div. I-A option but we do not. Dollerschell asked why not reserve spots in Div. I Tournament for I-A teams. More discussion. Raymo moved to do Div. I-A in 2025 the same as in 2024. Young second. The director deferred the motion to be discussed as a later time.

Regarding the Div. I format, Young presented two handouts (see sheet) for brackets for a 16-team tournament and asked for feedback. He said it "bugged the hell outta me" when Eden Prairie didn't truly compete in its Friday, Aug. 2, game against Burnsville. He said national wants Minnesota to finish on Saturday, not Sunday, before regionals. He said it also provides for a weather day. Discussion ensued. He said he leaned toward the color version, not the black-and-white one. More discussion. Miller moved to have eight Div. I substates and go with the color bracket structure for 16 teams, allowing 2 teams from each substate to be in the state tournament except for the host team. Dollerschell seconded. Young, jokingly, thirded it. Motion carried, with Peck and Kitzberger opposed. (See minutes for Zoom meeting of Oct. 9. The eight-team substate part of this motion was rescinded.)

Schaub said he had appointed Rothstein to be Div. I-A State Tournament Director with Brady Switzer still as tournament assistant. Schaub announced he had to leave for his daughter's wedding. Raymo took over running the meeting.

A discussion was had on the committee's finances, then further talk was had on the housing expenses of the different tournaments. (See finance sheet.) Miller moved to accept the finance report. Peck seconded. Motion carried.

Raymo called a break for lunch.

The next item was travel/club baseball policy for tournament play. Coombe began the talk on dual participation and what happens after a team loses in the postseason. Miller shared information from American Legion HQ. Miller says it will be good to see what National says in the next rulebook and discuss the matter further at the Spring Meeting.

Coombe reported that the 2025 Div. II Sr. State Tournament planned for Ely is coming along well. Players report July 31 and play Aug. 1 and 2.

Dollerschell said the 2024 Div. II Sr. State Tournament in Bird Island had 300 at its banquet, with Dick Jonkowski and Barry Wohler there. The banquet was in Redwood Falls. He said the tourney had 1,800 paid attendance. A webcast over a YouTube channel was popular. Weather issues impacted the schedule, but the right call was made. A great idea was a veterans picnic on Friday night. The tourney had good numbers for ads and sponsorships. (See sheet attached.) Only one team was within 50 miles, Sleepy Eye, but it stayed at a nearby hotel at its own expense. Teams stayed at the Redwood Lodge in Redwood Falls. There was an honor guard and national anthem at every game of the tournament. Miller said Bird Island did a tremendous job.

Rothstein shared that Richfield Post 435 had a veteran tribute night at a baseball game on July 5. Bloomington Honor Guard came, and the fans honored a young man about to enter the military.

Meal money was next up. Engstrom explained how \$10 came up missing — probably just a miscount of the original cash — and that the department adjutant and comptroller would like the Baseball Committee to stop giving cash to players for food. He said only Div. I Sr. does it (see attachment). He explained how places like Ely or St. Charles work with local restaurants to provide deals, which gets discounts for players while still making money because the entire family eats. Another way is like how Bloomington runs the Div. I Jr., with vouchers for the concession stand. He said it is up to the committee to decide what route to take, but it needs to drop the use of thousands of dollars in cash.

Young proposed dropping meal money altogether, noting teams are well-funded anyway, and parents are accustomed to purchasing meals at sports outings. Discussion ensued on options. Young ran through finances on how much each Div. I team received at the state tournament. He showed how the amount they received depended on how many days of baseball they played. He also said he hasn't signed a contract with St. Michael's Levi Fry because he wanted to know the outcome of meal money. Peck, Kalata, Kitzberger and Young wanted to talk outside of the meeting and come back with a recommendation.

Miller moved to name Barry Wohler, per Al Davis' suggestion, as Graduate of the Year. Young seconded. Motion carried.

Dollerschell moved to name Jim Haag, administrator and manager of Eden Valley-Watkins, to the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame. Thompson seconded. Raymo said he received three letters of recommendation. He read one of the letters. Motion carried.

Peck nominated Tayler Smith of Prior Lake to the Hall of Fame. He praised Smith for getting work done despite a handicap. Young seconded. Motion carried.

The rules were temporarily suspended.

A suggestion was made to name the entire Sleepy Eye coaching staff as Coach of the Year. Kitzberger moved. McCready seconded. Motion carried. (This was rescinded during the Oct. 9 Zoom meeting.)

Miller moved to name Moorhead Post 21 as Post of the Year. Discussion occurred on whether to name a post for a second time. Miller said Post 21 committed to donating \$250,000 to upgrade Matson Memorial Field over a 10-year period. Kitzberger seconded. Motion carried.

Peck moved to dedicate rulebook to Steve Timmer, longtime Moorhead coach who died March 14, 2024. Arvidson seconded. Motion carried.

Miller moved to name the championship trophy for Div. II Jr. State Tournament after Bob Nistler of Albert Lea. McCready seconded. Motion carried.

Young moved to name the Div. I Sr. All-Tournament Team after Rob Wassenaar. Miller seconded. Motion carried.

Miller moved to provide a plaque for fourth place at the Div. I Sr. State Tournament. Considering its size of 16 teams, fourth place is an accomplishment, committee members said. Arvidson seconded. Motion carried.

Miller motioned to name the Div. II Jr Runner-Up Trophy after Randy Schaub. McCready seconded. Motion carried.

Kalata moved to honor past secretary Al Zdon with a special recognition plaque from National American Legion Baseball. Thompson seconded. Motion carried.

The next topic was umpire in chief. Miller said he spoke with a contact with Nebraska Legion Baseball about how it structures its umpires, with an umpire subcommittee and an umpire in chief. Eric Guler of Pelican Rapids is respected in MSHSL, college baseball, Central Plains Regional. McCready agreed having an umpire in chief is a great idea. Arvidson moved to create an umpire in chief position and name Guler to it, if he accepts. Miller seconded. Motion carried.

Engstrom said when a committee or subcommittee in the Legion is formed it is standard practice to set the size of that committee. Raymo indicated the size could be set at the Spring Meeting.

A discussion was had on possible hosts in coming years. McCready said St. Charles is looking at 2026 for Div. II Sr. Dollerschell said he spoke with Green Isle about hosting. Miller noted Le Sueur is set to host in 2027. Raymo said 2025 is Ely, and the committee needs a 2026 host. Div. II Jr. for 2025 is Hayfield, 2026 Parkers Prairie and 2027 Sleepy Eye. Peck said Div. I needs a 2025 host and possibilities are Perham, Sartell and Excelsior. Thompson said he will speak with Sartell. Raymo said Schaub spoke with Arlington about Div. II Sr. 2026.

Next up was the pitch count and appearances rule for Div. II and Div. I Jr. Miller said it is a national rule, and if a kid got hurt because we changed the rule in Minnesota for all but one division, we would be liable. He motioned to put the appearance rule back into effect for Div. II and Div. I Jr. Thompson seconded. Peck commented that pitchers have more injuries these days before the pitch count rule came into effect. Motion carried.

Kitzberger asked about charging teams for playing in the postseason. Discussion ensued. Consensus was that it's up to the substate director to cover costs such as a baseballs. Kitzberger said now he knows what other substates are doing.

On the Spring Meeting, Kitzberger suggested moving it either a week sooner than in 2024 or moving it after April 1 so the committee has more knowledge of teams. Discussion followed. The consensus was March 15 at North St. Paul Post 39. The dates for the Fall Meeting were proposed as Sept. 27-28 at Thumper Pond Resort, Ottertail.

Thompson moved to recess until Oct. 9 virtual meeting. McCready seconded. Motion carried.

**6:30 p.m. Oct. 9, 2024**  
**Location: virtual, via Zoom**

Schaub called the meeting to order. This meeting is considered a reconvening of the Fall Meeting. Absent were Coombe, McCready and Raymo. Guest present was Div. I Jr. Chairman Jack Strong.

Kalata moved to approve Peck as a committee member and "Assistant to the Director." Kitzberger seconded. Motion carried.

Miller moved to rescind the Sept. 21 motion naming the entire Sleepy Eye coaching staff as Coach of the Year. Dollerschell seconded. Motion carried.

Kitzberger moved to approve Zach Haala of Sleepy Eye as Coach of the Year. Dollerschell seconded. Motion carried.



A discussion on meal money was next. Engstrom again explained Department HQ's stance of wanting to end the use of cash. Schaub said his opinion is dropping meal assistance at state tourneys. Kitzberger asked what other state tournaments do. Engstrom explained how they partner with local restaurants for discounts or they have vouchers at the concession stand. Young explained meal money costs Div. I hosts have had, and they have complained about the cost (half is born by the host, half by the Baseball Committee). Miller noted how Div. II tourneys and the Div. I Jr. tourney don't give meal money, so it's not an expense. Schaub suggested tacking on the meal money expense toward what the committee gives to the hosts in the first place. Young suggested the committee saves the money instead. Discussion ensued on lodging, community support and how comparing Div. I and II are not apples to apples.

Schaub suggested a cap on housing per room. Young said Peck has proposed a limit on how many rooms to pay for. Young offered to redo the contracts to pull out meal money, making it optional in case the host chooses to do it on their own. Kalata mentioned there are many references to meal money in the rulebook that would need to be edited. Schaub said he would comb through the Div. II contracts. Arvidson motioned to eliminate all meal assistance except for banquets. Young seconded. Kitzberger asked if any contracts have been signed. Young said he purposely held off signing the Div. I contract because he knew this discussion was coming. Motion carried.

Engstrom repeated the plans for having the Fall Meeting in 2025 at Thumper Pond. Miller described the resort where he resides. Miller moved to approve the plan. Thompson seconded. Motion carried.

Engstrom said he needs to know who is in or out and asked each committee member.

On Div. I Sr. Substates, Young said since the committee isn't going to increase Div. I-A, the Div. I Subcommittee wants to stick with 12 substates, same as last year but with Substate 4, 7 and 12 having two teams this year. He talked about travel distances and wanting to get word about the postseason structure out sooner than was done in 2024, when they had to wait on I-A. Discussion ensued.

Raymo joined the meeting.

Engstrom explained being flexible allows the tournament directors to decide the number of substates because the committee doesn't know how many teams will play Legion Baseball. Miller moved to rescind the part of his Sept. 21 motion regarding the eight substates. Arvy seconded. Motion carried.

Engstrom assured Schaub the rest of Miller's motion from Sept. 21 remains in effect, namely the brackets being used for the Div. I tournament. (Attached.)

On the Div. I Jr. State Tournament, Strong said he hasn't found a host for 2025. Alexandria is interested for 2026. Young asked whether Burnsville could do it. Engstrom asked whether a host can do two state tournaments. Schaub and Arvidson

talked about dates. Discussion ensued. Raymo asked why stay away from Bloomington and said it looks bad to give both to a single host. Strong said he needs to speak with Bloomington's Mark Scott.

Schaub and Dollerschell said they haven't heard about a host for the 2026 Div. II Sr. Tournament. Miller said Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton is a possibility. Raymo reached Atwater, which has a meeting the same night. Discussion ensued.

The talk returned to the 2025 Div. I State Tournament possible hosts: Sartell, Alexandria. Schaub said Alex is scared of the 16-team model. Young wondered whether New Ulm for 2026 was a possibility. Arvidson tossed how Glenwood-Lowry for Div. II. Raymo mentioned the high cost of housing around Minnewaska.

Raymo reminded Engstrom the committee selected March 15 as the date for the Spring Meeting at North St. Paul Post 39.

Kalata asked whether anyone attended the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame presentation for Father David Moran at Church of St. Michael on Sunday, Sept. 29. No one could make it.

Raymo said he is training Marshall Dalziel on registration.

Raymo moved to adjourn. Kitzberger seconded. Motion carried.