

## District 65 Toastmasters District Council Meeting Minutes

**Date:** April 23, 2024

**Location:** Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Presiding Officer:** Sam Otto, District Director

**Meeting Start Time:** 6:00 PM

### Meeting Call to Order

District Director Sam Otto officially opened the meeting, emphasizing the importance of aligning the district's activities with the mission: "We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence."

### Standing Rules Recap by Bill Kirby

The standing rules outlined during the meeting are designed to ensure orderly and efficient conduct of the District Council Meeting. Here is a breakdown of the key rules mentioned:

### Assignment of the Floor

- **Hand Raising:** Members seeking to speak must use the raise hand feature available in the virtual meeting platform. This helps maintain order and ensures that everyone who wishes to speak can be recognized in an organized manner.
- **Speaker Recognition:** Once a member raises their hand, the tech team communicates privately to understand the purpose of the request before granting the floor, ensuring that all discussions are relevant and productive.

### Debate and Motion Discussion

- **Time Limitation:** Each member is limited to speaking once per motion, with a maximum of one minute per speech. This rule helps keep the meeting on schedule and allows for broad participation.
- **Debate Structure:** Debate on any agenda item is limited to a total of 10 minutes unless extended by the chair, in which case additional time may be allowed to ensure fairness and thorough discussion.

### Voting Procedures

- **Method of Voting:** For the election and key motions, a virtual voting platform (Election Runner) is used, ensuring accuracy and confidentiality. Routine approvals, such as accepting reports, may use the raise hand feature for speed and efficiency.
- **Declaration of Results:** The chair declares the voting results, with the tech team assisting in counting if necessary, ensuring transparency and accuracy in the outcome.

### Technical Requirements and Malfunctions

- **Attendee Responsibility:** Each attendee is responsible for their internet connection. No district council decision is invalidated due to individual connection issues unless it impacts a significant portion of the membership.
- **Handling Interferences:** The chair has the authority to mute or disconnect any participant causing undue interference with the meeting, ensuring that the meeting proceeds without disruptive noise or interruptions.

### **Recording Policy**

- **Non-Recording by Attendees:** Attendees are not allowed to record the meeting to respect privacy and manage the distribution of meeting content.
- **Official Recording:** The appointed Zoom master officially records the meeting to assist in minute taking and then deleted post-meeting to maintain confidentiality, except for special circumstances where the recording is preserved for wider member access as announced.

### **Credentials Committee Report by Brion Keller**

- **Verification of Club Representation:** Confirmed active participation from 49 clubs, ensuring full representation across the district.
- **Ballot Issuance:** Detailed the distribution of 84 club officer ballots based on current registrations, supplemented by 25 district officer ballots, totaling 109 potential votes.
- **Quorum Establishment:** Confirmed the presence of a quorum, with attendance significantly surpassing the required minimum, ensuring all decisions made during the meeting were valid and binding.
- **Importance of Participation:** Emphasized the crucial role of each club's representation in making impactful decisions for the district's future.

### **Alignment Committee Report by Sherry Miller**

- **Analysis and Proposals:**
  - **Rationale for Realignment:** Addressed the need for realignment to support efficient resource allocation and better geographic cohesion among clubs.
  - **Specific Changes Proposed:** Introduced specific changes including the creation of two new areas to address recent growth and redefined boundaries for three existing areas to improve support and operational efficiency.
  - **Impact Assessment:** Provided a detailed impact assessment for each proposed change, ensuring transparency and fostering understanding among the club representatives.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Highlighted the engagement process with club leaders to gather feedback and ensure the proposed changes met the needs and expectations of the clubs affected.

### **District Leadership Committee Report by Kate Olsen**

- **Extensive Evaluation and Nomination Process:**
  - **Candidate Review:** Discussed the rigorous process of reviewing candidate applications for district leadership roles, including evaluations and interviews.
  - **Roles and Responsibilities:** Outlined the roles and responsibilities associated with each leadership position, ensuring candidates understood the expectations and requirements.
  - **Nomination Justification:** Justified the nominations based on candidates past performance, leadership capabilities, and alignment with district goals.
  - **Committee's Commitment:** Emphasized the committee's commitment to maintaining high standards and ensuring that all nominees were capable of advancing the district's mission.
  - **Metrics:** Applications were received from nine candidates. Of the nine candidates one applied for District Director, two for PQD and 2 for Club Growth Director. Five for division director positions, which were approved by the committee.

### **Elections and Candidate Speeches**

**Note on Candidate Speeches:** Candidates for Program Quality Director and Club Growth Director were allocated two minutes for their speeches regarding their vision and strategy for the upcoming term.

#### **District Director**

- **Candidate:** Avis Brodie
- **Outcome:** Elected unopposed. The Admin Manager cast a single ballot.

#### **Program Quality Director**

- **Candidates:** Gillian Sheldon and Brianna Wichowsky
- **Outcome:** Gillian Sheldon elected.
- **Speeches:**
  - **Gillian Sheldon:** Gillian Sheldon, DTM, a Toastmaster for nine years and an active member of District 65, Division A, is running for Program Quality Director. With extensive experience, including her current role as Education

Chair, she is proficient in the Pathways program and broader Toastmasters educational opportunities. Jillian's leadership is founded on three pillars: communication, collaboration, and education—prioritizing listening, working closely with district officers, and developing resources for club officers. She appeals for votes to continue enhancing the district, emphasizing her commitment to serving members and fostering an inclusive environment.

- **Brianna Wichowsky:** As Program Quality Director, she plans to work closely with district leaders to organize district-wide events like conferences, ensuring that all members have access to valuable resources and support. Her vision includes organizing training sessions and workshops to boost the quality of educational programs, providing guidance on educational programs, speech contests, and club meetings to align them with Toastmasters' standards and objectives. Brianna emphasizes the importance of teamwork and participation in the district to enhance communication and program quality. She encourages active involvement in meetings, speeches, and leadership roles, aiming to make the Toastmasters experience enjoyable and inclusive for everyone. For the 2024-2025 year, she is committed to creating a supportive environment where every member feels motivated to improve their communication and leadership skills.

### **Club Growth Director**

- **Candidates:** Jeannette Kreher Heberling, Robert Patterson, Brianna Wichowsky
- **Outcome:** Brianna Wichowsky elected.
- **Speeches:**
  - **Jeannette Kreher Heberling:** In her previous roles as a club president and Area Director, Jeannette led her club, Clarence Toastmasters, to achieve the President's Distinguished designation twice and supported struggling area clubs. This year, she spearheads the Youth Leadership Program and successfully launched a new club that chartered in February 2024. Drawing on her background as a fourth-generation farmer celebrating 100 years in agriculture in Western New York, she emphasizes the importance of timely action, equating club growth to planting seeds at the right time. Jeannette urges members to vote for her, promising to bring her proactive and supportive leadership to the district.
  - **Robert Patterson:** Robert Patterson is running for the position of District Growth Director and is currently the president of his club and the venue chair for the District Conference committee. With experience as an area director for two consecutive terms, he identifies a need for better recognition of Toastmasters in the community. Robert plans to promote Toastmasters to local chambers of commerce, companies, and technical associations, explaining the benefits of membership, such as improving skills in sales pitches and board presentations. His strategy includes addressing the needs of current clubs, engaging with various

organizations, and celebrating companies that already participate in Toastmasters. He concludes by reaffirming his commitment to expanding Toastmasters' reach and impact and asks for votes to support his candidacy as District Growth Director.

- **Brianna Wichowsky:** Emphasized their shared experiences with other Toastmasters, recognizing the challenges of balancing commitments while participating in Toastmasters. She stressed the importance of accommodating members' busy schedules and highlighted their responsibilities to retain current members and attract new ones. Acknowledging that the task could not be accomplished alone, Brianna sought collaborative efforts within the community, calling for feedback, guidance, and innovative ideas. They proposed expanding Toastmasters' reach to underrepresented groups like college students and retirees, believing these efforts could significantly increase membership and charter new clubs. Concluding with a call to action, they expressed confidence that together, they could make the 2024-2025 Toastmasters year exceptionally successful.

## **Division Directors Elected Unopposed**

### **Division A Director**

- **Elected:** Karen Stewart

### **Division C Director**

- **Elected:** Scott Shafer

### **Division D Director**

- **Elected:** Warren Muscleman

### **Division E Director**

- **Elected:** Matt Flanagan

Each of these Division Directors was elected by a single ballot cast by the Administration Manager, Ryan Kelly.

## **Reports Post-Election**

### **Audit Report by Nathan Rathbone**

- Confirmed full compliance with financial management practices as prescribed by Toastmasters International.
- Verified accurate recording of transactions and adherence to the budget, with a noted fiscal surplus of 5% above projected revenues.

- Recommended enhancements in financial reporting for increased clarity and tracking.

### **Finance Manager's Report by Lisa Garczynski**

- Presented a detailed financial analysis showing a budget surplus, attributed to increased member dues and cost-saving measures in event management.
- Forecasted a 10% increase in budget allocations to support expanding club needs.
- Outlined financial strategies to sustain growth, including establishing a reserve fund for unforeseen expenses.

### **Pub Public Relations Report by Keith Flint**

- **Acknowledgements:**
  - Expressed gratitude to Amy Campbell, the immediate past district director from District 61, for her inspirational contributions and for demonstrating what is possible in district public relations.
  - Thanked Sam Otto, the District Director, for facilitating a meeting that enabled further learning and collaboration.
  - Appreciated Kate Olsen, the immediate past district director, for appointing him to the public relations position at the beginning of the last program year.
- **Focus of the Public Relations Position:**
  - Emphasized that the primary focus this year was on enhancing internal communication within the district.
  - Utilized a monthly newsletter to distribute commentary from district leaders, announcements of events, various incentives, and tips related to the Toastmasters educational program, Pathways.
- **Achievements in Communication:**
  - Reported a significant increase in the email open rate to 46%, marking a substantial improvement from the previous year.
  - Continued to maintain and update the district website with essential resources including an events calendar, upcoming training opportunities, historical data, and current district leader profiles.
- **Social Media and Digital Presence:**
  - Maintained active engagement on social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn, allowing members to share updates and activities from their clubs.

- Implemented enhancements in event registrations, partnering with JotForm for efficient handling of registrations and payments, particularly for the district conference.
- Addressed and overcame technical challenges with the district's Facebook page, resulting in its successful relaunch.
- Initiated pages on LinkedIn and Instagram to reach broader audiences and attract new followers.
- Developed a District YouTube page featuring training videos to support member education throughout the year.
- **Support for Club Public Relations Officers:**
  - Offered club vice presidents of public relations free access to the professional version of Canva, enabling them to create high-quality promotional materials.
  - Noted that the division directors effectively utilized these tools to design promotional flyers for various contests.
- **Concluding Remarks:**
  - Expressed hope that his efforts have laid a solid foundation for future public relations activities within the district.
  - Voiced enthusiasm for the ongoing development of the public relations role and anticipation to see how his successor would build upon the established groundwork.

## **Club Growth Director's Report by Rachel Dowling**

### **Introduction and Congratulations**

- Rachel opened her report by congratulating the newly elected district leaders: Avis Gillian, and Brianna. She expressed confidence in their capabilities and anticipated continued success in their roles.

### **Status of Club Dues and Membership**

- **Dues Deadline:** Noted that club dues were due on March 31, but emphasized that there was still time for clubs to make payments.
- **Membership Challenges:** Acknowledged that some clubs were struggling with membership as highlighted in Sherry's alignment report. She pointed out that some clubs had seen an improvement in membership numbers since then.
- **Strategies for Membership Growth:** Recommended hosting open houses and speechcraft events as effective methods for building membership and engaging with the community.

### **Membership Incentives**

- Toastmasters International Incentive: Introduced the "Beat the Clock" incentive which rewards clubs for adding five new members between May and June.
- District 65 Incentive: Announced the "Vinyl for Membership Madness" which provides incentives for clubs that add four new members during the final four months of the Toastmasters year, offering a Toastmasters gift certificate as a reward.

### **Support for Struggling Clubs**

- Club Coaches: Reported that the district currently has 21 clubs with lower membership, and that three of these clubs now have assigned coaches to help address their challenges.
- Success Stories: Highlighted a specific club that had resolved its payment issues with Toastmasters International, thereby improving its standing.

### **New Club Developments**

- New Club Formations: Celebrated the formation of new clubs within the district, marking a significant achievement as these were the first new clubs added in recent years.
- Shout Outs: Gave recognition to individuals like Benedict, Xavier Tar, Brendan Francis, Jeanette Kreher Heberling, Linda Marie Brown, and Denise Kelly, who played critical roles in establishing these new clubs.
- Prospective Growth: Noted that the district currently has five active leads for new clubs, with more prospects on the horizon, including demo meetings scheduled to potentially launch corporate clubs.

### **Outlook and Closing Remarks**

- Rachel expressed optimism about the future of club growth within the district, indicating a positive trajectory with strong interest in new club formations. She thanked Sam and the district office for their support during her tenure as Club Growth Director, highlighting the honor and privilege she felt in serving the district.

### **Program Quality Director's Report by Avis Brodie**

#### **Introduction and Team Acknowledgements**

- Avis expressed her appreciation for working with Rachel, Sam, and Keith, highlighting the collaborative efforts that made the year successful.
- She acknowledged the contributions of the Program Quality Director (PQD) teams and key committee chairs including:
  - Conference Committee Chair: Peter Relyea, who led the planning and execution of the district conference.
  - Education Committee Chair: Jillian Sheldon, recognized for her exceptional work in organizing numerous workshops and training sessions.



## **Educational Initiatives and Achievements**

- Pathways Committee: Chaired by Gloria Gibbons, with support from team members like Ryan Kelly and Judy Britton, focused on enhancing the Pathways learning experience.
- Speechcraft Chair: Brianna Wichowsky, praised for her effective leadership in the Speechcraft program, which significantly contributes to educational outreach.

## **Upcoming Workshops and Training**

- **Scheduled Workshops:**
  - A workshop on how to run a club election is set for May 1st.
  - Club officer training sessions planned for June 8th and June 11th.
- **Ongoing Support for Clubs:**
  - Regular emails updating members on upcoming events and necessary links for participation.
  - Implementation of new member orientations to facilitate their integration into Toastmasters and the Pathways program.

## **Membership Development and Workshops**

- **Magnificent Membership Workshops:**
  - Conducted by Rachel and Avis, these workshops are designed to attract new members and retain existing ones. The next session is scheduled for the end of May.
- **Distinguished Club Program:**
  - Highlighted the achievements of clubs working towards distinguished status, with a focus on clubs like the Empire Statesmen, which are close to achieving all ten goals.

## **District Conference Highlights**

- Guest Speaker: Announced that Jocelyn Tyson will be attending the conference, a significant highlight given the global span of Toastmasters districts.
- Contests: Detailed the schedule for the evaluation contest and the International speech contest, emphasizing the high level of competition and the opportunity for members to showcase their skills.

## **Goals and Outlook**

- **Training and Development:**

- Emphasized the importance of both phases of club officer training, noting that a substantial number of club officers were trained across two sessions.
- **Strategic Goals for Distinguished Clubs:**
  - Discussed the district's strategy to increase the number of distinguished clubs, underscoring the ongoing need for clubs to grow and maintain active, engaged memberships.

### **Final Remarks**

- Avis concluded her report by reiterating her commitment to enhancing the quality of education within the district. She encouraged ongoing dialogue with members to continuously improve and adapt the educational offerings to meet their needs.

### **District Director's Report by Sam Otto**

- **Details:**
  - Reviewed the year's strategic accomplishments, focusing on the significant growth in both membership and club performance metrics.
  - Outlined the strategic goals for the upcoming year, emphasizing infrastructure development, member support, and leadership training.
  - Announced the introduction of a new technology platform designed to streamline district operations and enhance communication across clubs.

### **Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

District Director Sam Otto adjourned the meeting at 7:53 PM.