



Minnesota Curling Association

2025 Annual MCA Board and Membership Meeting

Sunday, May 18, 2025, 6:30 pm, via Zoom

Call to Order

In attendance: Lisa Rudolph (MCA President, Arden Hills), Norma O’Leary (MCA Treasurer, Duluth), Darwin Isdahl (MCA Secretary, Four Seasons), Jeff Annis (MCA USCA rep, Heather/Mapleton), Dave Willford (Bemidji), Duane Hasegawa (Cook County), Kerry Hاديaris (Duluth), Ramona Sjostrand (Itasca), Clint Andera (Frogtown), Randy Czarnetzki (Glacial Ridge), Scott Holwerda (Glacial Ridge), Mike Kolb (Mesabi), Howard Fulk (St. Paul).

Per MCA bylaws, a quorum is two thirds the executive board and one half the current paid club membership. The current membership is twentyfour clubs with Four Seasons expected by year end, which is up from twentytwo in the prior year. While the club quorum fell short of the one-half quorum, the bylaws allow business to be conducted with notification that the quorum was not met. If the executive board were included, there were members of eleven current clubs represented, with twelve if Four Seasons were counted.

The 2025 agenda and meeting minutes from the 2024 annual meeting were accepted and approved without changes. The order of the agenda was altered as required to accommodate the schedule of the presenters.

USCA Business Update (Jeff Annis)

Two more independent directors were added, Rachel Nichols and Oscar Wong. Rachel was a broadcaster for Fox Sports. Jeff feels they will be good additions.

Mixed doubles, "Para" and "Para- mixed doubles" have qualified the USA for the 2026 Olympics. There is concern that neither the Men's team nor the Women's team have qualified yet.

The National event in Duluth went very well, although the ice did not meet specifications. Going forward, more time will be budgeted for ice preparation for such events. The expectations are high for the Olympic trials that are coming up in Sioux Falls, SD. This will be the first time the paralympic event will be added to this event. There is a desire to have more competition on the "Para" side. Preparation has already started for the 2034 Olympics in Salt Lake, with consideration as to how the USA can continue to improve commensurate with the worldwide teams that are rapidly improving.

USA Curling continues to exceed their projected membership goals.

President's Report (Lisa Rudolph)

Lisa thanked the attendees for coming and the board for their commitment, appreciating their wealth of knowledge.

2024-2025 was a good year for the MCA. There are now over 6,000 curlers that are members, making ours one of the largest regions (along with Wisconsin and the GNCC). We are seeing a lot of good success competing at the national level, with several Minnesotans making the podium.

Ongoing activities

- We continued producing a bonspiel calendar
- We had better participation numbers in our playdown events this year
- We continued to work on website
- We have brought back “the gopher” on the patch for championship events
- We will soon be ordering pins to award to participants of playdowns and ordering more championship pins
- We are working on trophy maintenance
- Curling Day in Minnesota went well. Four Seasons had good publicity in the media and we were able to name the Minnesota club curling champions on that day. Next year, Curling Day will be on January 17, 2026, an Olympic year. *We will try to play off the Olympic theme and get publicity for curling.*

New Initiatives

- Curling was featured in “Explore Minnesota” this year.
- The water bottle initiative (with the club stickers) received a great response. There are still about 500 left, which is about ½ those originally available. Stickers were mailed to member clubs, but some haven’t yet requested their stickers.
- Next year, we would like to put together a newsletter. *We are looking for volunteers to help with that.*
- Some surveys were sent out last year with just two or three questions. This seemed to get a good response, so we will continue that method next year. We are looking for ways to help clubs, perhaps by pooling resources or sharing knowledge, so feedback is appreciated.

Treasurer's Report (Norma O'Leary)

- 2024-2025 continued the trend up from the COVID years, where we have now roughly matched pre-Covid numbers.
- Four Seasons has not yet paid their dues, but intends to do that soon.
- Precise budgeting is difficult, as the MCA gives money to the host clubs, and we don't know in advance how many events we will have.
- We are currently projected to have a profit of \$1,691, with the possibility that pins could cost more than forecast.
- The MCA welcomes the Baudette and Fosston curling clubs as new members!
- The Putnam fund now has \$83,585 in it.

The treasurer's report was accepted without changes.

Recap of MCA State Events (Lisa Rudolph)

- **U18** - Curl Mesabi hosted in November, including ten boys teams and five girls teams. Team Guentzel and Team Newman (boys) and Team Johnson and Team Ponzio (girls) went to Nationals, with Teams Guentzel and Johnson winning the gold. Next year, Hibbing is tentatively scheduled to host.
- **Club Playdowns** - Bemidji hosted in January. Polo (mens) and Stolt (womens) were the winners, going on to Nationals in Milwaukee. Brainerd is tentatively scheduled to host next year.
- **Mixed Fours Playdowns** - Dakota hosted in February. Team Stolt won the event and went on to play Nationals in Denver. Two Harbors plans to host this event next year.
- **Arena Playdowns** - This did not take place due to the lack of a host club. *We need to find a way to get some clubs into the rotation to host this event.* Nationals will be in October in Las Vegas. Consideration has been given to combining Wisconsin and the Dakotas, though difficult as it would involve a lot of travel.

- **Minnesota High School Championship** - Cambridge hosted this event, and it went great. When Cambridge signed on to this event, they were able to get the approval to upgrade and expand their facility's club room, as well as adding streaming services.

We would like to get back to a five-year club rotation, as had been done in the past.

USCA Event Recap and Upcoming (Lisa Rudolph)

USCA held five events in Minnesota during the season:

- Last Chance Mixed Doubles Qualifier (Curl Mesabi)
- Junior Mens and Womens (Duluth)
- Mixed Doubles (Duluth)
- Mens and Womens Nationals (Duluth)
- 5 & Under (St. Paul)

Minnesota teams

- Korey Dropkin and Cory Thiesse competed at Worlds and qualified the USA for the 2026 Olympics
- Team Dropkin and Team Peterson competed at Worlds
- Senior Women (Team Margie Smith- St. Paul) competed at Worlds and Senior Men (Team Mike Farbelow - St. Paul) competed and won the bronze medal

Next season, Curl Mesabi will host the Pan Am games, which will be held in the arena and at the club simultaneously.

USWCA Report (Lisa Rudolph)

- Frogtown and Dakota joined the USWCA for the first time
- USWCA is reworking their boundaries, which should make it easier for Minnesota clubs to get into USWCA events

- Sally Augustine's team (Arden Hills) won the first event at the USWCA Senior Nationals this season

Club Reports

Bemidji (Dave Willford):

- Memberships are down about 10%, with juniors making up a large part of the drop.
- They are evaluating financials to see whether they can afford to pay some employees again rather than relying on volunteers.
- There could be a possibility of hosting the high school event, as their normal March events are not lined up as usual.
- The high school has three 50-minute curling classes with a fourth on one day. They are hoping this leads to new members.

Glacial Ridge (Randy Czarnetzki and Scott Holwerda):

- They are working with the World Curling organization on underwriting some costs for low or no interest loans.
- Randy is working with umpires, and feels we do a better job in Minnesota with this than many others.
- Glacial Ridge is getting close to a decision on whether to move into a lease space with a dedicated four sheet facility with a warming house. If this works, they could be curling there as early as November. The club has been growing, but has to move in order to expand or accommodate everyone interested.
- They had considered hosting the Arenas last year, but it may be more likely this year.
- It seems those interested in officiating courses have diminished since the pandemic.

St. Paul (Howard Fulk):

- The 5 & Under National event went well. Kudos to Geoff Strack and company for a well-run event.
- St. Paul has just over 1,100 members, which is similar to pre-pandemic levels.
- Elections were just held, with about 35% participation. Elections were electronic.

Frogtown (Clint Andera):

- Their elections received about 30%, using electionrunner.com. For the At Large board position, there were seven candidates for one seat so they chose to use ranked choice voting. They advertised the open board seat more than normal, probably leading to so many being interested in the position.
- Frogtown rewrote the club bylaws this past year. As a result, the President and Vice President will now run as a slate, while the Secretary and Treasurer will run on the off years from those. There will be one At Large member on the ballot each year for a three-year term (there are three At Large members on the board). Terms will now begin in May. They will run an “end of the year” staff meeting with the new board, the past board and all staff.
- Their calendar is largely set for next season with the exception of some high school curling. They would like to host the high school championships at some point, but it looks unlikely next year.
- Frogtown continues to work with the state on funding for their needed compressor. For now, the compressor remains stable. The “Mighty Ducks” grant continues to look like the best option.
- They changed their club championships this year, where they combined the event with volunteer recognition and made it a “mini-bonspiel.” They had a lot of club members attending to cheer on the championship game. It was very successful.

Duluth Curling Club (Kerry Hadiaris):

- Duluth has not yet determined whether they can host junior mixed doubles next year.

- They received a great deal of positive feedback from USA Curling on their national event (volunteers, ticketing sales, fans).
- Duluth currently have 766 members.
- They also recently held elections; Sam Thiesse is the new president.

Cook County (Duane Hasegawa):

- As a small club, Cook County has elections in an open house. The open house was more successful than usual, as some younger members came. There were only two leagues this year, so they offered newer members the opportunity to sub.
- Several middle school and high school kids signed up with their parents through Community Education. They are hoping they join in the long term.
- There was a lack of Canadians for their bonspiel even though they offered the entry fee on par in Canadian dollars. They have been dependent on Canadians in the past. They are looking at new ways to attract others.

Two Harbors Curling Club (Norma O'Leary):

- They do not get Canadians for their bonspiels as they used to, but they are close enough to the Twin Cities to attract teams from there.
- Since the pandemic, the club membership is made up of much younger curlers, including on the board.

Itasca Curling Club (Ramona Sjostrand):

- Itasca is currently at about 130 members, about half of which are seniors.
- They do a lot of fundraising, fun, spiels, etc.
- They are trying to develop camaraderie between their club and others. This past year, the Seniors paired with Bemidji, where the Seniors went to each other's clubs to curl with them. Next year, they hope to do the same with Brainerd and Hibbing.
- Itasca held elections at their local brewery with paper ballots.

- They are also raising money for a compressor fund. They haven't had luck with grants yet, so most fundraising is through local restaurants, etc.

Four Seasons Curling Club (Darwin Isdahl):

- Membership is in the 400's, with the ability to add more, as some leagues were not full.
- Hosted the World Deaf Curling Championships recently, which was very successful. Curlers from other Twin Cities clubs really helped out with timing, etc.
- The Lupus Spiel is coming up later this month.

Some clubs felt that as members get younger, they may see a shift where curlers are more "curling customers" than "club members", where they are more interested in recreation than being a member of a club. The clubs may have to shift their model to charge more if they don't volunteer so they can hire the work. This isn't always the case, but some felt there may be a trend. A personal "ask" still seems to be the most effective method of getting volunteers. Other clubs use the "voluntold" method, where tasks are assigned. Others have a minimum hour requirement, where they pay more if they don't reach the minimum volunteer hours. It is difficult to track the volunteer hours.

Old Business (Lisa Rudolph)

Putnam Fund: We are continuing to work on the idea of creating an endowment. We don't have enough to make a huge investment, such as compressors, but a low or no interest loan may be feasible. Grants may be oriented toward ideas that will get people into the clubs, such as assistance for high schools or middle schools to come and curl or even adults.

Dues collection date: Currently MCA dues are due from the clubs on January 31st. If they don't get paid, we typically wait a month before chasing it down. By that time, clubs are already thinking of shutting down. Would it be a problem to move to January 1st? It

was noted that this may depend on the club policies on due dates. It seems that if the deadline was viewed as more serious as the club dues are sometimes viewed, there may be more success.

Playdown events: When a team registers, the fee to USA curling is \$25 / curler + a regional fee historically of \$90 per team paid through USA curling to the region to help offset the cost of running the event. Next season, USA Curling is expected to raise the \$90 fee to \$100 per team.

Election / Certification of Officers (Lisa Rudolph)

All present officers have indicated that they are willing to continue in their present positions. Lisa encouraged others to join if they are interested.

President:	Lisa Rudolph
First Vice-President:	Jason Botterill
Second Vice-President:	Kathy Busch
Treasurer:	Norma O'Leary
Secretary:	Darwin Isdahl
USCA representative:	Jeff Annis
Member at Large:	Phil Devore

New Business (Lisa Rudolph)

- MCA dues have been at \$3 / curler for many years. In 2019, there was talk about raising it to \$4 / curler, but it didn't happen, even though there didn't seem to be an objection. The question was debated as to whether now would be the time to make the increase. Several club representatives were willing to support the

increase. With the club currently in the black (or close to it) along with money in the Putnam fund, *it was requested that a Pro Forma financial statement and an indication of what else would change be produced to help some clubs justify the increase.* For example, a suggestion was made to increase the amount paid to clubs for hosting from \$750 to \$1,000. *Lisa indicated we will follow up with that.*

- Next season is an Olympic year, which always gives curling a bump. Lisa asked what types of things have successfully been done in the past and what plans they may have, as well as what the MCA can do to help.
 - Frogtown has discussed holding more open house style events for “Learn to Curl” events. They expect to have information out there ahead of the Olympics so when people search during or after the Olympics, it will be out there. They expect to ramp up events to be ready for the time after the Olympics, which will be later in the curling season.
 - The Twin Cities Curling Association is exploring whether to bring in some of the local former Olympians in the Twin Cities to do something at the Big Spiel, such as throw out the first stone. *A suggestion was made to bring other former Olympians throughout the state to have a “meet and greet” at clubs.*

The meeting was adjourned.