Squash BC Planning Meeting Minutes

June 3, 2017, 10:00 am

Vancouver Racquets Club, Vancouver

**Meeting Attendees:**

Nancy Thompson – President SqBC

Rob Wilson- Shawnigan Lake School

Jimmy Valliere- VP Technical SqBC

Shawn Zwierzchowski – Apollo and Cheam clubs

Donalda Meyers - Director at Large SqBC

Ian Sefton – University of Victoria

Paul Stevenson - President BC Jesters

Cindy Longley – SqBC Jr Development Committee

Steve Hawyes – Zone 7 Northwest BC rep

Jon Money – Past President SqBc

Bruce Matthews – Director at Large SqBC

George James- VP Finance SqBC

Rebecca Vassilakakis – Zone 1 Kootenays rep

Natasha Doucas – VP Marketing & Communications SqBC

Rahim Jessa – Victoria Squash Club & CWG Chair

Lee Clackson – Zone 6 Vancouver Island South rep

Mark Ingram – Chair Vancouver Squash League

Tom Bedore – Executive Director SqBC

Kevin Kydd – Technical Director SqBC

Rachel Au –Evergreen Squash Club

**AGENDA**

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| **SQBC Planning Meeting officially begins** |
| **Introductions and Overview*** Agenda reviewed. No revisions.
* Overview of Squash BC accomplishments to date including Directors reports.
	+ Tom gave a report on membership numbers: 2016/17 total membership was 2,163 which was down from the previous year total of 2,433. From an age standpoint, the bulk of our membership is 25+ years of age (86%) and from a gender standpoint, primarily males (78% males, 22% females). The number of clubs increased from 28 the previous year to 32 in 2016/17 with a total of 121 singles courts which is an increase of 34 courts. Doubles courts stayed the same at 4.
	+ Kevin talked about competitions, leagues and numbers. We had 34 sanctioned tournaments in 2016/17 (25 adult, 9 junior) and 11 leagues across the province with 1,238 participants (76% male, 24% female).
	+ Natasha talked about marketing and communications. Natasha talked about getting information from events and other squash activities and people who should be recognized so she can update the communications.
	+ Kevin then talked about Sporty HQ and updates with the meeting with Henry Weber from SportyHQ in the prior week (May 26/17). Some of the information coming out of that meeting included: SportyHQ has hired 2 new technical people to improve the service, one in South Africa the other in New Brunswick, 7 provinces are now using SportyHQ & Squash Canada is considering SportyHQ, developing a priorities list of changes needed to SportyHQ with timelines. Squash BC has completed 3 years of a 5-year contract with SportyHQ. Mark Ingram offered to help develop a video on how to use SHQ for our members.
	+ Nancy talked about the Constitution, Bylaws & Policies. Bylaws were totally revised in accordance with the new Societies Act of BC. These were approved by the membership in January 2017 at a Special General Meeting. Policies that were approved by the Board between Nov 2015 and Feb 2017 have been incorporated into the Policies and Procedures document. The Policies and Procedures are currently being reviewed and a major revision to bring them up to date will be undertaken this summer.
	+ Staffing was next with Nancy. There have been many changes over the year. Jordan Abney left in July. Christine Bradstock was hired as the new Executive Director in mid-August. She left at the end of Dec. Christine came with two new staff members, bookkeeper and program coordinator. Tom Bedore is the new Executive Director and has been on the job for about two months as of this meeting. Kevin Kydd will stay on as Technical Director as will the bookkeeper.
	+ Nancy talked about revenue generation this past year and raising $12,000 through the Building the Future Fund (BFF) this past year. The BFF is a complimentary fund to the 2020 Fund.
	+ Tom talked the major change to SQBC’s accounting system making it an online accounting system and a new budget format that is now being implemented. The changes will make it easier for the bookkeeper to keep our accounting up-to-date and more useful when reporting to Gaming and the Government.
	+ Tom talked about the junior pathways program and how well it did. The program was started in March 2016 with almost 100 children taking part in clubs from around the province but primarily in the Lower Mainland. There are more Pathways planned for the summer of 2017 including the northern part of the province. Because of the success of Jr Pathways, Tom suggested we use the template for getting women and men into the game.
	+ Squash Canada Update: Nancy talked about going to SqCan AGM June 8-10th. Whole new staff at SqCan as of a few years ago and there has been significant positive change in the amount and type of communications with the provinces and territories (PTs). They have a 4-year strategic plan. Their focus is on the High Performance (HP) and marketing/communication. They are involved with ParticipAction 150 and Squash day across Canada is scheduled for September 30th.SqCan will be developing and sharing ideas and promotional materials with the PTs and leading a national campaign to introduce squash to the general public. They sold the 2015 Pan-Am glass court and will fund the HP program with the funds. They are working on developing a unified ranking system across the country. Hosting bids have been changed and seeking two year commitments rather than one year as it has been in the past. SqCan is going to fund a team to go to softball doubles world champs. Hosting a coaching developer weekend this summer in August. Optimistic about getting into the 2024 Olympics.
	+ Natasha talked about Women’s squash. Squash BC has taken over the Womens Week which has been successfully organized by the Vancouver Squash League in the past. The Week will be extended throughout the province and will take place the last week of September to coincide with national Squash Day on September 30th. There is a committee that’s looking at things that are happening around the world and more information will be coming out shortly. Looking at a women’s weekend that has other activities. Other discussions have included the potential of a women’s pro doubles event at some point over the next 12-18 months.
	+ Highlights from the Junior Development (JDC) was presented by Cindy Longley. She felt the BC juniors are beginning to challenge the ON juniors. The juniors are starting to travel internationally a lot more. There are three provincial jr squads - provincial training squad and two regional squads, Lower mainland & Vancouver Island and Interior. The juniors have to make commitments and they are living up to their commitments. There are several challenges that JDC will be reviewing at their annual face to face meeting on June 11th including: review of the fees for squad coaches which have not changed in many years; the challenge of getting clubs to host squad camps and in consideration of the policy that the club should be a member of SqBC; and getting coaches who are certified. There was an information session with university kids who talked about their experiences at university squash. The Jr Development Committee primarily focuses on the HP juniors and not on the more grassroots programming. The JDC is very happy with the Pathways program. The JDC will be reviewing its role with the intent of either adding members with a grassroots interest or recommending a new youth committee focused on grassroots. The funding to a top junior is around $400. The Gudewill funding will add another $200 on average. There was a question asked if SqBC could find matching funding to the Gudewill funds. A question was asked about the relationship with SqBC and SqCan in terms of when SqCan gets involved. Cindy talked about how juniors are added to SqCan squads including the Athlete Identification Program and the Battle of the Borders events and camps. In addition, Jamie Hickox the National High-Performance Director for SqCan comes out every year. BC had10 of the 24 juniors on the Battle of the Border squad in 2016 and for the first time in many years Canada won that event.
	+ Jimmy Valliere talked about the officiating program SqCan introduced this year. We have an online database and the program has been changed to a competency based system. The course is online. The assessors have to take the new assessors program. We started providing funding for doubles officials for some tournaments in the same fashion that was implemented a couple of years ago for single officiating.
	+ Ian Sefton talked about Post-Secondary Squash at the University of Victoria. The 2017 BC Post-Secondary championships were held in Victoria. There will be discussions on how to get more people playing at all Post-Secondary institutions across the province. A beginner program has been started at UVic. There’s a league there also. Club nights are held with king of the court style nights and social. It grew from 30 members a few years ago to 70 this year. A lot of emphasis is on the social aspect. Cindy talked about the cost for Post-Secondary students to go into tournaments. Ian said the cost was a barrier. Tom asked about using the UVIC model to get into other schools. Shawn Zwierzchowski asked about construction of courts at UBC and Paul Stevenson said that the intent of Jesters is to ensure that the building of squash courts in the newly proposed recreation and fitness centre at UBC will be included. A UBC team has been playing at Dunbar Rec Centre. Ian said UVic is going to use a movement tracking system that can log the actual movement on court. Cost for full time students at UVic is $180 and they can join the club for $25. University of Edmonton has an actual squash course which they get credits. At UVic there was a school program where the kids are brought in after school during the year. There’s a “Racquets” camp in the summer that is very successful. And they run a Ladies night which has proven very popular.
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| **Presentations** * Squash BC Strategic Plan
	+ Nancy Thompson reviewed the Strategic Plan Key Initiatives for 2016/17 and provided an update on progress. The 2017/18 Key Initiatives in a draft were presented. These will be approved by the Board on June 4th.
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| **Squash BC Annual General Meeting 11:45 – 12:30** See specific SqBC AGM meeting minutes |
| **Around the Province*** Rebecca Vassilakakis reported on Zone 1 Kootensays. Revelstoke is fundraising for a new club with 4 squash courts in a shared multi-purpose building located at the new golf course. Nelson is going well with their new pro, Sarfarez Ahmed. Castlegar has one court and needs some ideas for one court usage. Trail is going well. Cranbrook still has one court. Nakusp and Fernie each have 1 court.
	+ George James reported on Zone 2 Thompson/ Okanagan. Had 14 teams of 5 playing in the league which is the most teams and players ever. Squash is healthy in the Okanagan. The Kamloops club No Limits Fitness is still in operation.
	+ Kevin Kydd reported on Zone 3 - Fraser Valley had the same league numbers as last year. Apollo is losing 2 courts, Newlands is closing its 4-court squash facility and the YMCA in Chilliwack is losing 2 courts. There is talk of adding a court in the Maple Ridge rec centre.
	+ Kevin Kydd reported on Zone 4 Fraser River There was talk of trying to get courts going in Delta but it seems to have lost some momentum. Shakiru Matti has moved to the River Club. The Sandcastle Club has two courts with one Div 2 team in VSL.
	+ Zone 5 Lower Mainland - has the Vancouver Squash League which is going strong. Had lots of squash tournaments. Held the junior nationals at Hollyburn in April 2017 with a large draw and great success by our BC athletes.
	+ Lee Clackson reported on Zone 6 Vancouver Island South: Shawnigan Lake is very strong with strong coaches and elite juniors. They also have a recreational program with about 150 students. And the school opens its doors to the public on Thursday nights for adults and every Sunday morning for children and teens. Brentwood College with 3 courts still has a program running. Hopefully, Brentwood will match Shawnigan with their programs. St. Michaels University School (SMU) is going well with high level players. Cedar Hill is doing well with Ben and Phil and they have a large junior program and lots of adult members. Victoria Squash Club is going well. Quadra is still going but not a member of SqBC. They have lots of public members.
	+ Zone 6b Vancouver Island North - Port Alberni is going to reopen and become a member. Nanaimo has grown to about 170 members. Comox Valley is still doing well. Campbell River still open.
	+ Steve Hawyes reported on Zone 7 Northwest. Steve moved from South Africa where he ran a 14-court club. Terrace has 1 court that had 6 members and they built it up to 30 this year but despite the growth, the facility decided to close it down. The squash group got together to give a plan to the University to build 3 courts. Steve pointed out that it’s the local people who are going to grow the sport of squash. Squash BC can facilitate the local people but cannot do it themselves. He talked about different programs to get squash going. He has personally gone to Smithers, Prince Rupert and Prince George. Steve is going to start running the Pathways program in Smithers this summer.
	+ There was a discussion about how to get courts built and how to promote court usage. Squash BC needs to keep track of where glass courts are. Some suggestions of how SqBc can help included: letters of support; developing business cases appropriate to the types of facilities e.g. rec centres, post-secondary institutions, member owned clubs, etc.; providing specs on courts including approximate costs, information on maintenance and ongoing costs of maintenance; providing list of SqBc approved suppliers and the advocacy to prevent squash courts from being eliminated.
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| **Speaker** **Andrew Lynn – Promoting squash in clubs/facilities.** Andrew sent a presentation to Squash BC which talked about how to promote squash in a club. He did an audio to go along with the power point presentation. After the presentation, there was a lot of discussion about the areas Andrew talked about. It was an excellent presentation. The notes will be available on the SqBC website shortly. |
| **Round Table Discussion on promoting squash in clubs/facilities** The floor was open to those in attendance to share ideas about promoting squash to existing squash members and to non-squash playing members in that club.For existing members:1. Get more engagement through communication including meeting with members as they socialize around the squash courts and talk to them about what they would like to see and to provide information about what is being offered. Person to person communication is important.
2. Make sure your staff knows what’s going on with the squash program e.g. front desk staff, maintenance staff
3. Send out an email weekly about what’s going and if possible keep it short and to one topic so it’s easy to digest
4. Create a sense of social – that is what makes a club different than just a facility with squash courts. And any size of facility has the ability to become a club. Create a sense of squash community. A vibrate squash community at your facility will help create interest from non-squash playing members or visitors to your facility.
5. Keep your facility clean. It doesn’t seem important but it really is. Keep your walls cleaned regularly and the locker rooms regularly maintained and fresh as well as the squash viewing areas if applicable.
6. Offer introduction or re-introduction sessions and with a small charge like $10 to help ensure people show up. During the session ensure they get a good run around even if it’s not hitting the ball so they leave feeling they had a good work-out and had fun.
7. Put together a referral incentive. Thank your members who bring in a new person to try squash. At Bentall they give each member 5 guest passes to encourage them to bring in new people.
8. Run every event ‘for a fee’ with the intent of generating a small profit. This helps ensure that management sees that squash can make a profit.
9. Know what everything costs
10. Be organized. At Bentall their club tournament is run over 4 weeks – one night a week for 4 weeks on the same night e.g. 4 Wednesdays. Run your tournaments when your members are most likely to play. You’ll find more people will join the tournament or event because it is their usual squash time.
11. Consider 1 night a month for women only and women only drop in sessions with bring a friend.
12. To boost youth participation at Bentall they started a children of non-member program offering lessons and drop in times.
13. Some clubs offer different sessions once a week for different age groups e.g. 6-8 yrs old, 9- 12 yrs and 13-17 yrs.

Steve Hawyes shared his experience at the club he owned in South Africa where his club made a deliberate decision to focus on youth in squash. He invited local youth to come try squash and then sat with them to ask how they found their experience. The big comment was this place is boring. The squash is okay. He delved further and made some significant changes. He painted all the squash court walls different vibrant colors (vibrant because the ball shows up better than on a pastel colored wall) and let the kids play their music as loud as they want during their session times. Initially, it wasn’t well liked by some of the other members but they were educated on the benefits. After only a few years Steve had over 350 kids playing squash on a regular basis at his club. Many of the juniors went on to competitive play with some becoming South Africa champions. But most importantly, he has a lot of kids playing squash and bringing their non-playing friends to his club to participate in a really fun program in a stimulating environment. |
| **Adjournment**  |
| **Zone Representative orientation**  |