



**U.S. Association of Blind Athletes  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes – September 18, 2024**

**Present:**

*Mark Ackermann, Board Chair  
Skye Arthur-Banning, Vice Chair  
Gary Remensnyder, Treasurer  
David Cohen, Board Member  
Matt Simpson, Athlete Board Member  
Brian Eaton, Independent Director  
Eve Wright Taylor, Board Member  
Eliana Mason, Athlete Board Member  
Calahan Young, Athlete Board Member  
Tyler Merren, USOPC AAC Alternate  
Molly Quinn, CEO  
Catherine Raney Norman, Staff  
Breann Scott, Staff  
Amanda Duke Boulet, Staff*

**Absent:**

*Zach Buhler, Athlete Board Member  
Jennifer Demby, Board Member  
Amy Wasson, Secretary  
Tracie Foster, Chair of Nominations & Governance Committee  
John Kusku, Chair of Ethics & Judicial Committee*

The meeting took place via teleconference. The meeting was recorded.

**Call to Order / Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order by board chair Mark Ackermann at 4:00 p.m. MST.

**Conflict of Interest**

Mark asked if any board members had a conflict of interest. No such conflicts were declared.

**Board Chair Highlights**

Mark congratulated all of our athletes on all of their work over the past quad and we look forward to being more supportive of you as we go forward. We had a great contingent at the Paralympics in Paris. This was Mark's first international competition to attend, and he was privileged to be there as chair of this organization. Other board members shared their experiences and Skye noted that they had 19 students, mostly from Clemson University and 22 in total with staff. These students had a chance to be part of a goalball demonstration and most of them mentioned how special it was to meet the athletes and be a part of the experience. Calahan and Matt commented on how great it was to have family and fans in the stands and to be part of Tyler Merren's fifth Paralympic Games.



We completed our Board Assessment from the USOPC and as part of the board packet for this meeting, members received the performance overview. The high-level overview is that we had higher marks than the previous assessment we did this two years ago, and some areas where we need to improve. A great report and a great opportunity for us to learn from each other and to learn what people think is working and what's not working. Bylaw changes are in motion, it has been recommended that to be a board candidate one would need to serve on a committee for two years as part of the vetting process. An update was provided on the move to the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs (OPTC) and the organization's departure from Turnstone.

### **CEO & Staff Report**

The 2024 Q3 CEO & Staff report was provided as part of the board packet. Personnel updates were provided for blind soccer and for marketing/revenue support. The National Governing Body recertification process has started and the first round of documentation is due in mid-September. The organization is tracking to be on schedule. We are in the final stages of the USA Goalball program and OPTC agreement. We secured PlayLA Goalball clinic for the winter of 2025 and started the third season of the blind soccer clinics. Great strategic discussion around the need to increase participation for blind and visually impaired youth and working toward breaking down the transportation barriers that educators and parents face.

### **Committee Updates and Reports**

Tracie Foster was unable to make the meeting and committee member Tyler Merren gave the Nominations & Governance Committee (NGC) report. For the upcoming election, the Committee reviewed their responsibility to vet, nominate and put forth the candidates. The NGC will put forth the board candidates during the November board meeting. In December during the annual meeting, there will be the election for the four board positions which expire at the end of the year. The four positions are two (2) At-large Directors, Constituent Director, and an Independent Director. We have three (3) open committee positions: a sixth person to the Ethics & Judicial Committee and the two seats will come up this December for the NGC. The USOPC AAC election (which includes an alternate) will be held in the fall for the next Paralympic quad and follows the 10-year Goalball athlete list for eligibility. At the end of December, the second athlete board seat that will come up for election, which follows the 10-year Goalball athlete list and potentially could be expanded for blind soccer if we meet the requirements.

John Kusku was unable to make the meeting and board chair Mark Ackermann gave the Ethics & Judicial Committee report with two hearings that are taking place in the coming weeks.

Gary Remensnyder gave the Audit & Finance Committee update and reviewed the 2024 Q2 financials that were provided to the board members prior to the meeting. The organization reported on Q2 actual results to budget. Overall, we are close to the budget in Q2 with one exception. In 2024, the organization was awarded a match challenge gift, and we secured two pledges to match the gift. Since the two matching pledges do not have restrictions, all three gifts are fully recognized in Q2 2024. The committee and staff decided to go ahead and adjust our budget to reflect that change in accounting procedures. The staff received a draft of the 2023 external audit, there are a few cosmetic changes that need to be made, and we reported a clean audit.

Calahan Young and the internal Athlete Advisory Committee are working on a community survey.



### **Sport Performance Strategic Session**

At the beginning of the year, we held a USA Blind Soccer strategic session with athletes, coaches, leadership and a couple of board members, and this was extremely helpful. Now after the Paris Paralympic Games, we need to do some of the same work for the USA Goalball Program as part of our five-year strategic plan initiatives and metrics. Additionally, the USOPC has made it clear that podium performances are going to dictate funding in the LA28 quad. An overview of the USA Goalball Men's National Team performance from Paris was provided with input from the group.

The meeting went into executive session at 6 p.m. MST.