

Administrative Council Conference Call – May 11, 2011

In attendance:

Council Members: Chris Trentelman, Anne Sushko (Chair), Anneliese Vogt – Harber, Miki Christophersen, Anne Moss

Staff: Stephan Hienzsch, Melissa Schoedlbauer, Cindy Vimont, Kim Sodt

Prior to discussion of the meeting agenda items, Stephan clarified that the Council is now officially called the Administrative Council instead of the Administration Council. The EB determined that the name of the Council was in conflict in the P&P's and Bylaws documents, one stating Administrative and the other stating Administration, so it was decided to edit the P&P's during the spring meeting to be in line with the language used in the Bylaws, which is to Administrative Council.

Review of initiatives presented in the Administrative Committee reports to the Executive Board (EB) for their spring meeting.

Anneliese requested more information on what the GMO PrezList is. Anne Sushko provided some clarification. Anne Moss felt it may be good to provide more clear instruction on how to join the PrezList. She just joined and couldn't figure it out when she tried. Melissa will provide better "step by step" instructions to those joining, as well as information about the different settings. The different types of dialogue that take place on the GMO PrezList were discussed.

Anne Sushko stated that the EB approved the revamping of the GMO awards program, which will be moving forward in 2012.

Report and discussion of outcomes from the Spring EB meeting pertinent to the Council (verbal report from liaison, Stephan Hienzsch)

Stephan said that the GMO media awards and other award changes were approved by the EB. The ALD nomination process was modified. The EB decided they wanted to see a conference call take place within Committees and then a secret vote which would go to the liaison.

Stephan further explained why the board wanted to require Committees to have a conference call regarding their ALD nomination. The EB wanted to create opportunity and promote transparency, and provide more mechanisms for discussion on the Committee's nominee. The EB fully recognizes the first year of ALD nominations will be a learning experience, and the process will likely be tweaked in the future.

Stephan said the EB also discussed possibly changing the terms of the ALD's, so they would be staggered with the "off" election years for Regional Director and Officer elections. The EB agreed this wasn't the year to implement another Bylaws change regarding ALD's, being it is the first year of ALD elections, so this change will not go forward for 2011. Stephan asked if anyone knew of any Bylaws changes their Committee may be proposing.

Chris Trentelman stated that PM bloggers have been discussing why PM delegates can't be GMO delegates. If a Bylaws change regarding this is proposed, it will be coming from the Bylaws Committee. Stephan reported that the EB discussed the possibility of financial delegate support, particularly for PM delegates. The EB couldn't figure out how to provide that support. How do you choose which volunteer branch to support over another? The outcome of that discussion was that the EB agreed to lower the annual convention fee to provide some financial relief – pre-registered USDF members would get the lowered fee.

Stephan stated that the EB discussed the merits of open/closed meetings again. Last year the EB said there should be no closed meetings, unless for a very specific group. The EB is recognizing that this may not work for everyone all of the time, even though they would rather go with the direction of not having closed meetings. Anne Moss said she would be supportive of a Committee choosing whether they would want a closed meeting. Stephan stated that if a Committee has a compelling reason that they want a closed meeting, the EB will consider it, but won't necessarily approve it.

Stephan stated that instead of closed meetings, Committees within the Administrative Council may want to consider roundtable discussions. They typically have better attendance and are educational; more so than just a regular open meeting. Two Committees can join together for a roundtable discussion; particularly those Committees that have a lot of cross over in their membership. It may be more interesting and meaningful to attendees.

Stephan said during the spring meeting, the EB stressed heavily that USDF needs to make a better effort in membership growth, retention and outreach initiatives. There were some ad-hoc Committees that worked on this after the strategic plan was put together. The EB would like to put staff to work with volunteers, particularly GMO and Membership Committee groups; possibly putting together working groups within each of these Committees to put together ideas. The EB wants to see more involvement with the Membership and GMO Committees. Stephan asked to hear ideas about how a working group should be put together and how to get maximum participation from these two Committees.

Anneliese stated that from a competitor's standpoint, she doesn't know how to increase membership. She feels like USDF is giving people more and more opportunities not to be a PM. Many more opportunities for people to get free information (e-TRAK, etc). Hard to promote PM membership when so many other types of membership give good free benefits.

Stephan said that, in general, this initiative will be largely staff driven, but wants feedback from Committees. Stephan wants thoughts on how to put together one or two working groups with one or both Committees (GMO and Membership Committees). How can we utilize the Committees?

Anne Sushko stated that there were three people on the GMO Committee that she would put forward to be on a working group because they participate and always have ideas. Competitors have said unless going for championships, they don't want to spend the money on PM membership, because still get the free benefits without it. It's too easy for people to be a part of everything without being a PM. Discussion between Council members followed.

Stephan asked everyone to think about who would be active and interested in participating in this initiative on an advisory working group to explore ideas about membership growth and retention. Stephan will be in touch after this call to get it all put together. We don't want to exclude the GMO and Membership Committees. We would rather utilize them for this initiative than have the EB create an ad-hoc group.

Anne Moss asked if USDF sends GMO's an invitation to join as a PM member, or do current PM's just receive an invitation to rejoin? Melissa explained. Discussed inserts in Connection and targeted E-news.

Q&A of the At-Large Director Nomination process and discussion of developments to date.

Stephan asked if there had been much expression of interest. Membership, GMO and Bylaws Committees all currently have one person from their Committees interested in serving as an ALD. Discussion of when everyone scheduled their ALD nominee conference calls.

Review of common goals and where there might be overlap in Committee activities.

Anne Sushko asked if anyone noticed common goals or overlapping goals between Committees. Anne Moss stated the Historical Committee has overlap with many Committees. The deadline for HOF nominees for Lifetime Achievement has been extended to June 1. Anne Moss asked if Committees might be able to provide some nominations.

Concerns and or initiatives that the Council might want to convey to the EB.

Anne Moss stated that getting renewals from members at the GMO level is always a hardship. Her GMO lost a large number people each year over the last three years. They are getting new members to replace them, but retention of members is difficult.

Stephan commented that USDF loses about 5000 members a year. We replace most of them, but if USDF only lost half that number and still got in the same number of new members, USDF would have about 10,000 more members. Retention is easily overlooked. It's easier to keep a customer than get a new one. Discussion between Council members followed.

Stephan said that it doesn't really matter if it's a GM or PM we're losing; the real question is what's it going to take to keep them as a member. The real reason people drop their membership is because they are no longer competing.

Discussion. Have to show that PM membership is not just for competitors. Anyone interested in dressage should be a PM. Stephan said the Education membership was created to try to retain those members that drop their PM membership because they are no longer competing. Education membership still has to catch traction. There is still a lot of work to be done to get more Education members. Stephan discussed the benefits of e-trak. Feels that if we sell e-TRAK, that will in turn drive new membership and retention on all levels – because e-Trak is for PMs, GMs, and Education members.

Discussion of who e-trak is advertised to and where advertised. Suggestions made by Council members of other people USDF may want to send information to. Chris mentioned creating a brochure to have at Regional Championships; GMO's could add their logo to a brochure to customize. Others mentioned sending e-TRAK info to TD list, show secretaries and show managers.

Anne asked if anyone else had anything they wanted to bring up or discuss. Miki asked for people to remind their GMO's that delegate appointments are due by the August 31.

Meeting Adjourned.