



Massachusetts Forensic League Board Meeting, 9/19/04

Present: Lisa Honeyman, Deb Simon, PJ Wexler, Mark McNeil, Deanie Goodman, Dave Cohen, Joyce Albert, Beena Koshy, Chris Palmer, and Lynne Coyne (Observer).

1. Opening remarks (McNeil), to continue work on the projects that have been started with the aim of completing them before the term of the current board expires.

2. **Mission Statement**

A proposed mission statement was presented (McNeil). The mission statement reads:

The Massachusetts Forensic League was established in 1958 as an organization to promote interest in speech training through interscholastic debate and competitive oratory, interpretive speaking, and interpretive oral reading. Its mission is as follows:

... to provide the opportunity to practice and refine communication skills while developing self-confidence and self-worth through the vehicle of competitive speech and debate ...

... to facilitate opportunities for character development and service while learning to exercise analytical and oratorical skills, critical thinking, and rhetoric ...

... to offer its members an avenue of verbal expression with hopes of a nobler means: forming human identities, connecting with others, examining values, enacting within cultures, and learning to work collectively.

After minimal discussion, the Board moved (Wexler/Albert) unanimously to adopt the mission statement.

3. **Duo Proposal**

A proposal was put forward to change the rules of Duo Interpretation (Simon). The proposal was primarily intended to permit students in Duo Interp to perform with multiple characters per competitor and somewhat relax the movement restrictions. The amended Duo rules read:

Memorized event, 10 minute performance with a 30 second time limit. Duo is a unique event challenging two performers to render a dynamic moment utilizing appropriate vocal expression, restrained gesture, and interaction between partners. As a unit, the two performers will vocally and physically respond to each other's verbal and non-verbal cues while maintaining an off-stage focus. Thus, the scene requiring disciplined interplay between partners is created in the minds of the audience. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem. Material from more than one source is not allowed. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. Speakers may not take lines belonging to one character and apply them to a different character in the performance. The material may be humorous or dramatic, or may combine both tones, depending on the work selected. Performers may play more than one character if they choose, but it is not required.

The Board generally agreed that permitting a more permissive ruleset allowed students to compete in multiple national leagues as they choose. Debbie pointed out that two-character duos are just as successful at NFL Nationals as multiple-character duos. The proposal would also open up the number of available scripts. On a motion (Palmer/Wexler), the Board unanimously accepted the proposal. The rules for Duo are changed immediately.

3. Project Reports

3.1 DVD Project (Simon)

The DVD project is progressing. All the state champions except for Group and Congress were taped last year, and came out reasonably well. Mike Daley, an alumnus of the MFL, is editing the first tape/disc, which will consist of the performances of the State Champions. This project will hopefully be done by early November.

The second half of the project, a judges' instructional video, will take longer, as it involves transcribing or narrating rules and guidelines for judges. Deb will seek an editor for this half of the project, and report.

3.2 Handbook Revisions (Honeyman, Albert, Palmer)

3.2.1 Judges Handbook:

The Handbook committee presented a working draft of an Individual Events Judges' Handbook. Discussion followed on how best to incorporate debate events into a judge's manual. The Board also currently lacks formalized descriptions of the two debate events. An ad-hoc group (Wexler, Cohen, Koshy, and Coyne) offered to send teaching descriptions of LD and Policy Debate to include in a Judge's Handbook for Debate.

Eventually it was decided in the interests of conserving paper to create two separate handbooks for IEs and Debate events. In the interest of consistency, the MFL Board will also provide suggested rules for events that are commonly offered at MFL Tournaments, such as Impromptu. Tournament directors will be encouraged but not required to follow these rules when offering these events.

3.2.3 MFL Constitution

Mark reported that amendments to the Constitution simply have to be submitted to the state government once enacted; they do not have to be cleared any further. Chris noted that the Constitution as currently written clearly suggests that the Membership votes on amendments, but as the Constitution is currently written the Board itself is the voting body for constitutional amendments. He suggests the membership vote on a new Constitution first and then the Board vote to affirm the membership's will.

Chris and Lisa worked in January on suggested changes to a MFL Constitution. He will email out the result. Mark asked that everyone consider both this draft and the current Constitution and send drafts or ideas to the Board as a whole in advance of the Coach's Convention in November.

3.3 Fundraising

Mark asked for the Board to approve \$200 for the purchase of new T-shirts to use in fundraising for the coming year. He also asked for additional small funds for stopwatches. The Board (Simon/Palmer) approved this unanimously.

3.4 Website hosting

Chris will put in procedures in place for the continuation of the website. He will create written instructions and pursue a formal arrangement with the MFL's hosting provider, AskOnline Software, to ensure continuity of the website.

Chris also reports that Daniel Schlozman, an MFL alumni, has kindly donated a laptop computer to the League to use in its computerization efforts. The Board thanks Daniel.

4. Public Forum Debate

On a motion (which happened in the middle of the Projects reports), the Board unanimously voted (Wexler/Cohen) to allow Public Forum as an event at States in 2005. This motion does not make Public Forum an official MFL event. However, it will be offered at States according to the rules published by the NFL in 9/2004. To qualify for states in Public Forum, a team must have advanced to elimination rounds at the Manchester and Lexington TOC tournaments, or must have placed in the top 8 of any other MFL

tournament where Public Forum is offered. These tournaments must follow the rules of the NFL as published in 9/2004 in order for students to qualify at them.

5. Petition by Ursuline

Ursuline Academy petitioned the Board for financial assistance in order to hire a coach with forensics experience for their coming school year. The Board did not release funds immediately without first ensuring that all other avenues of funding have been exhausted, and for further assurance that the assistance would keep the program at Ursuline alive for years to come. The Board offered assistance and invitations for the new speech teacher at Ursuline to learn more about forensics. The Board also expressed the need for a clearer set of guidelines for programs asking for assistance of the League as a whole. The Board also discussed other ways of helping new programs get on their feet, such as tournaments waiving registration fees and other kinds of assistance.

6. Hall of Fame Tournament

The MFL Hall of Fame tournament will be run, like States, on the online tournament software. Chris will coordinate tab. The tournament will not offer Policy this year, as numbers have been too low historically to justify the event. Mark asks that the Board encourage people to come, both for the experience of the early tournament, and also to honor Sr. Virginia Maria Dunross and Timothy Averill on their induction into the MFL Hall of Fame. There will be no lectures or the like during the Hall of Fame this year, to focus attention on the inductees.

7. Debbie Simon Service Awards

The Board took nominations and voted in recipients unanimously of the Debbie Simon Service Award. The recipients will be announced at the Hall of Fame tournament.

8. Coaches Convention

The schedule for the Coaches' Convention was presented (McNeil). He asked for \$1,000 for various expenses, food, and training materials. The Board (Honeyman/Simon) unanimously approved. The Board also encourages all coaches to come to the Coaches Convention. The schedule will be arranged to allow for 10 hours of PDP time.

9. Middle School Charter

The Middle School coaches present (Goodman/Simon/McNeil) presented Articles of Organization and a request for sanctioning as the Massachusetts Middle School Forensic League (MMSFL) to the Board. The Board (Koshy/Wexler) voted to accept and sanction the MMSFL unanimously. Further work is yet to be done on the curriculum, event guides, code of conduct, and structure of the MMSFL.

10. Code of Conduct/Professionalism and further concerns

Out of the discussion of the Middle School programs, the Board developed a concern that while its own students are asked to abide by standards of professionalism at all times, these are never defined nor agreed upon. The Board is also concerned about the haphazard nature of supervision that is allowed to occur at tournaments. As a general guidelines, requiring an adult who is either an authorized agent of the school or the child's own parent to be at the tournament site at all times, was agreed upon. The Board members will also come up with individual drafts of proposed professionalism codes for submission at the Coaches' Convention.

11. Next meeting

The next official meeting of the MFL Board will be at the Coaches' Convention.

Massachusetts Middle School Forensic League
PROPOSAL FOR MFL SANCTIONING

TITLE: Massachusetts Middle School Forensic League
DATE: Established September, 2004
ADMINISTRATION: Program Chair (current: Sue Wurster, Nashoba Brooks)
MFL (voting) LIASON: At Large Board Member (current: Deanie Goodman,
Wilson Middle School)
ORGANIZATION: The following are the initial "articles of organization."

"Articles of Organization"

Section I: Events

To maintain sanctioning, MMSFL Tournaments will offer the following events: Prose, Poetry, Play Reading, Duo Reading, Oratory, Declamation, and Impromptu. Other events may be offered but these are necessary for sanctioning.

Section II: Scheduling Logistics

Article I: Tournaments must be flighted, offering 2 preliminary rounds, a Merit round, and an Honors round. Events must be flighted in this way:

FLIGHT A: Prose, Play Reading, Oratory, Impromptu
FLIGHT B: Poetry, Duo Reading, Declamation

Article II: Tournaments must provide two judges in the preliminary rounds offering a competitor a total of four ballots. The lowest ballot (rank) will be dropped; only 3 scores will be tabulated to qualify a student for out rounds. 1 judge must be provided for the Merit round; 3 judges must be provided for the Honors rounds.

Article III: A total of 12 competitors may advanced-the low 6 into the Merit round; the top 6 into the Honors round.

Article IV: Trophies will be provided for the Honors round competitors; ribbons will be provided to the Merit round competitors; Honorable Mention awards will be provided to non-advancing students who tied or came close to advancing.

Article V: No sweepstakes awards or awards that demonstrate a school's overall rank at tournaments will be offered at MMSFL competitions.

Article VI: Students must be paneled with strict priority given to (1) same schools must not hit each other (unless it is inevitable); (2) schools should not be forced to judge themselves (unless it is inevitable-then it is possible as long as the competitor is not a relation of the judge).

Section III: Rules for Competition

A committee will be established to create the event specific rules for Middle School competition. The event rules will be presented to the MFL board for approval.

Section IV: Tournament Calendar

Coaches who are planning to host a tournament will meet one time prior to the speech season. This meeting is to be organized by the MMSFL

chair.

Section V: MFL Relationship

Middle Schools who belong to the MMSFL receive the auspices of the MFL: (1) workshops, (2) invitations to tournaments, (3) et al. However, they may not compete at the State Championship. NOTE: If a student competes at more than two (2) MFL tournament, he/she forfeits the MFL "novice" status. If a MMSFL student competes more than twice at any high school tournament, then he/she loses his/her eligibility to compete in the MMSFL.

Section VI: Membership

Any Middle School is theoretically eligible for membership. However, competitors must be 6, 7, or 8th graders. If a Middle School maintains students other than these grades, a waiver must be granted by the Chair for competition.

Section VII: Fees

At the current time there are no dues, however, the MFL reserves the right to revisit this section as the MMSFL grows and develops.

Section VIII: Grievance

Tournament grievances are heard first by the Tournament Host/Director. If no agreement can be made, then it is heard by a committee of the Tournament Host/Director, the Chair, and the MFL At Large member. The Grievance Committee decision is binding.

Section IX: Membership

Schools must apply for membership each year. The application must be on file with the MMSFL Chair prior to the first tournament or the school may not attend.

Section X: Beginnings

The above are simply guidelines in place to offer some semblance of "initial" order. A committee will be established to further evaluate and develop. They will (1) submit formal "Articles of Organization," (2) form rules for events, (3) formal ballots, (4) formal procedures for Chair election, (5) formal procedures for regulation.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark J. McNeil, MFL President