

2016 Council on Legislation - Day 1

On Saturday April 9 and Sunday April 10, Rotary members from all over the world arrived in Chicago to discuss changes to the policies guiding Rotary clubs. Council members had a day of orientation Sunday when they settled in before getting down to business Monday morning. I arrived on Saturday evening, where I met old friends and new friends. In our week stay, council members will discuss more than 180 pieces of legislation, either enactments or resolutions to the Board.

The council is like Rotary's own version of a congress. Held every three years, it gives clubs a say in how their organization is governed, and allows members to adapt Rotary to keep it relevant in a rapidly changing world. On the table this year are proposals that could give clubs greater flexibility in the timing and nature of their meetings, enhancing the ability to attract members who are at different stages of their careers. During Sunday's orientation, COL members heard about the progress Rotary is making on its strategic plan, and the five-year financial forecast which will drive a special vote on dues on Wednesday morning. Our half day session adjourned on Sunday evening for dinner hosted by each of our Rotary International Directors.

Monday's first full day began promptly at 9:00AM CDT with 510 voting members in attendance. After a test vote to check the electronic voting equipment, in which the council overwhelmingly "mock voted" to move the proceeding to Tahiti, the council began real deliberations.

Discussion on the first proposal, to require clubs to provide members with minutes of their board meetings within 60 days passed, 318 to 136.

This morning's discussions so far centered around club administration. Various ideas have been floated to help make clubs stronger by improving the efficiency of the club's leadership.

The council has approved a change to the Standard Rotary Club Constitution that clubs use as a model, to help smaller clubs by reducing the number of committees they need to form. Previously, the model suggested 15. But the proposal, narrowly approved, suggests clubs have five: club administration, membership, public relations, Rotary Foundation, and service projects. Presenters argued that since 90 percent of clubs have fewer than 60 members, finding 45 plus members to serve on 15 committees can prove a challenge. The five committees can be formed easily, and are the most critical. Larger clubs could still appoint other committees as needed.

After an eventful morning, council members adjourned for a morning break.

In its closest vote yet, the council narrowly approved removing references to admission fees from the bylaws. Proponents argued that the concept of an admission fee does not project a modern image of Rotary, which instead should be built upon dynamic membership and service. Doing away with admission fees, they argue, would expand the pool of prospective members.

After more than a half hour of lively debate, the council kept youth service as the fifth avenue of service, and not re-name it "new generations service", the name that the fifth avenue had until changed to youth service by the 2013 council. The fifth avenue was first added to the original four -- club, vocational, community, and international -- by the 2010 Council.

The council then adjourned for lunch. Having tackled 12 pieces of legislation, progress has been a bit slow when you consider the council has more than 180 proposals to get through this week. Still, speed will inevitably pick up as the council progresses and gets a better feel for its deliberations.

Lunch ended, and there is a big vote coming up. By special order, the council has skipped ahead to a proposal by the RI Board, enactment 16-21, which would give clubs greater powers of flexibility in deciding for themselves the time and day they meet, how many times they meet, when to cancel a meeting, and what counts as a meeting.

An amendment to the Board's flexibility measure has passed. The amendment specifies clubs have to meet a minimum of two times a month. Discussion of the measure itself continued as I, your representative, made the following comments in debate:

"Mr, Chairman, I am Mark Kriebel, District 7170, and I will be speaking in English. Fellow delegates, I urge you to support the passage of this enactment, for the future of Rotary will be in jeopardy if 16-21 is not passed. Many of our regions, and North America is a good example, have experienced a steady decline in membership over the last decades. Our clubs have struggled to address this decline, but have not had the tools and flexibility to change their club's meeting times and attendance requirements to better reflect and serve the desires of their community. Unless clubs were lucky enough to become a pilot club in some of Rotary's tests, they could not modify their meeting time, place and frequency. And even if they were a pilot club, participation was a cumbersome process with extensive reporting requirements. All of you are Past District Governors and know every club is

unique, with unique personalities and requirements. Many of our clubs are very successful and 16-21 would not require them to do anything different - but - the fact is, many of our clubs are already breaking the rules by trying new things, and approval of this enactment will legitimize their actions. I urge passage of 16-21 so to allow our very intelligent 1.2 million members to figure out what makes sense for their club in their community. As Rotary, we join leaders, and encourage these leaders to exchange ideas to grow their clubs. This enactment will empower them to take action to create bigger, better, and bolder Rotary Clubs"

Applause broke out as the council overwhelmingly approved 16-21, the measure to give clubs more flexibility in deciding the times and days they meet, how often they meet, when to cancel a meeting, what attendance requirements should be, and what counts as a meeting. By a previous amendment, clubs will still be required to meet at least twice a month. Proponents believe these changes are historic and necessary for Rotary to thrive and attract new members.

Council then considered another RI Board-backed proposal to give clubs more freedom in deciding the kinds of membership they offer. "Creativity in our clubs is very great. They have already been trying many of these measures." Following its earlier action, the council gave clubs a second big vote of confidence, approving a measure to allow clubs greater flexibility in deciding membership. Some previous experiments have included corporate membership, which allows several people from one company to share a membership.

The first day of action came to a close, as several proposals were withdrawn, as they suggested similar changes in flexibility to those approved earlier in the afternoon.

I'll have another summary tomorrow evening after we conclude day 2.

Mark Kriebel, 2016 District 7170 COL Representative

2016 Council on Legislation - Day 2

After a Monday evening dining out with friends, the Council prepared for a second full day of deliberations.

The Council Chamber had new voting equipment today, as the time for tallying the vote on Monday was excessive. We tested the new system with a "mock vote" on whether we would experience snow today in Chicago. The yes votes (192) were overshadowed by the no votes (329).

First enactment up today was a measure to allow clubs the ability to simultaneously hold meetings in person and online. Six years ago, the Council approved e-clubs, allowing members in different parts of the world to meet together online. This year, the Council has approved a measure recognizing that more and more clubs are meeting in a combination of ways, in-person and online. The proposal gives a nod to in-person clubs meeting sometimes online, and e-clubs holding occasional in-person meetings, and a combination of the two.

Following up on yesterday's theme of flexibility, the Council approved simplifying qualifications of being a member. The enactment replaced a series of qualifications with a new definition that a club be composed of "adult persons who demonstrate good character, integrity, and leadership; possess good reputation within their business, professions, and /or community; and are willing to serve in their community and /or around the world." Presenters said the measure will grant clubs the responsibility and authority to choose their own members without a checklist. This was a truly radical change in the Rotary policies, and caused many other proposals to be withdrawn, as they were crafted to tweak the existing verbiage regarding membership qualifications that had already been abolished.

Council is taking up an idea that would allow Rotaractors to also join Rotary, but because it incorporates parts of the Rotary constitution that had already been deleted by earlier enactment, it will not be considered until Thursday morning, so that the Constitution and Bylaws committee can make necessary modifications.

And the council has taken its morning break, while the Constitution and Bylaws committee sorts out some of the implications of recent actions on other proposed actions. Legislating can be a challenging process.

As the council considers the idea of associate members -- a new type of member that would pay only half the dues but would not have voting rights -- they are taking the time to sift through a flurry of amendment requests. The council has also postponed the consideration of associate members until Thursday, as it deals with potential members in the same age range as the Rotaract proposal.

Eagerly awaited after a morning of nuancing proposals, the Council breaks for lunch. At lunch, action shifts to discussions and small tweaking of rules and wordings of amendments. These discussions are an important and vital part of the democratic process.

Lunch ends and we reconvene promptly at 2PM. This afternoon's session will consider changes to the way Rotary selects its president, board of directors, and district governors.

Seeking to clarify and define the role of the RI president, the council approved a measure that specifies that the president will serve as motivational leader for Rotary members worldwide, and act as chair of the board, presiding at all its meetings. The president will have other responsibilities as assigned by the board. Presenters said the measure clears up past ambiguities about the role of the president of Rotary International.

The council rejects a proposal to extend the terms of RI directors from two to three years.

Council overwhelmingly rejects a proposal to require district governors to have been a member of a club or clubs for at least nine years. The present requirement is seven years. Those opposed noted how the council has already voted several times to encourage younger members, and felt the same should apply to seeking younger district leaders.

There are then a series of enactments that are defeated including the abolition of the position of vice-governor that was created in 2013, the modification of the requirements to sit on the board of director's nomination committee, and several enactments are withdrawn that are now moot since the enactment was approved that simplified the requirements of membership this morning.

Tomorrow morning our session will begin with the special item addressing a dues increase for the next few years. The amount being proposed is considerably more than recent years, so I expect a lively discussion!

I'll have another summary tomorrow evening after we conclude a shortened day 3.

Mark Kriebel, 2016 District 7170 COL Representative

2016 Council on Legislation - Day 3

On Sunday when the Council met for their first session, special orders of the day were created that pre-scheduled certain important pieces of legislation. The enactment for a dues increase was deemed one of those important pieces. Thus, the first business for the day on Wednesday will be voting on the proposed dues increase

The board is proposing a \$4 per capita dues increase beginning in 2017-18, to avoid having to make serious cuts or having surplus fall below bylaw levels in 2020. "We are at a moment in time when we must think beyond the status quo. We MUST think about our future," RI Vice President Greg E. Podd, speaking in favor of the dues increase. Debate on the dues increase is the liveliest yet. I spoke in favor of the increase:

" Mr Chairman, my name is Mark Kriebel, District 7170, and I will be speaking in English. Fellow delegates, all of us like a bargain! From A to Z, automobiles to zippers, everyone wants the most for their money - including when it comes to Rotary! The five-year financial forecast shows we have managed to cut expenses through innovative initiatives without impacting our ability to deliver support to our members. Our current dues of just over one US dollar per week opens the doors to priceless ethics driven international service, fellowship, and leadership opportunities! Rotary is unique, and to pay four US dollars additional per year to keep excellent service to our Districts, Clubs, and Rotarians, is like drinking one less Starbucks coffee per year! Rotary dues will remain a bargain even with the proposed dues increase. As we all know, the real cost of the Rotary experience remains meal costs, which are typically ten to twenty times the cost of dues. As past officers of Rotary International, it is incumbent on all of us to keep Rotary fiscally strong by supporting this dues increase. But it must not stop there. Each of us needs to go back to our Districts and explain why this increase was so important, and how it positions us to move forward with the financial strength our members expect. Just as we demand sustainability for our projects, it's up to us to leave a sustainable Rotary to the next generation as our gift to the world."

There were well-reasoned arguments on all sides. Those reluctant to approve a \$4 increase have expressed concern for its impact on membership. Those for the increase insist it is needed to offset poor investment returns, inflation, and the need to provide members with services and programs -- like improvements to the website and Rotary Club Central -- to enhance membership. Lines were still forming at the microphones as council members express their views on the dues increase when, speaking in favor of the increase, past RI President Rajendra K. Saboo said "I come from a part of the world where \$4 is not a small amount. But I ask, what has Rotary given to me... Rotary has made me a better person. What price do you put on that?" Trustee Thomas Thorfinnson said "The world has changed. Clubs are not the only front office. When my daughters look for a product, they go online. If we are to change Rotary as you have so far, we cannot afford to have a presence on the internet anything less than innovative and cutting edge." The vote on the \$4 dues increase comes over an hour after closing comments. The council has just passed the \$4 dues increase.

The Council then returned to the normal order of items to consider with a few enactments clarifying the method of selecting the vice governor, a role that was added by the 2013 Council. With amendments and points of order, a lot of time was used on these proposals. Then came the

modifications on choosing the representatives to vote for members of the Council and the director selection committee. Quite tedious work, but necessary nonetheless.

The Council then tackled a proposal that would remove the distinction between traditional and e-clubs. Recognizing that clubs already meet in a variety of ways, the council just voted to remove the distinction between traditional and e-clubs. There are currently 275 clubs labeled e-clubs, with 5,900 members. Now, all clubs are clubs, who can sometimes meet online, sometimes in person, depending on their needs.

The council will be breaking early today, to allow council members a chance to tour RI Headquarters in Evanston. I have been there many times and will stay back at the hotel, but most Council members have never visited One Rotary Center in Evanston. We will start early tomorrow at 8 a.m., rather than our usual 9 a.m. start, due to where we are on the consideration list and how much time remains until midday Friday.

I'll have another summary tomorrow evening after we conclude day 4.

Mark Kriebel, 2016 District 7170 COL Representative

2016 Council on Legislation - Day 4

For its first action of the morning, the council approved adding to the bylaws a provision that new clubs need 20 members for a charter. Proponents said that number was needed for a healthy club to get up and running. The Board had a policy for the minimum needed, but the bylaws had previously been silent on the subject.

There are 535 Rotary districts, and eight of those districts have fewer than 1,000 members. The council approved a measure giving the Board more flexibility in merging smaller districts, dividing larger districts, and reassigning clubs from small districts that border larger districts. While there is little financial impact to RI of smaller districts, proponents believe very small districts are at a disadvantage in leadership and resources for service projects.

Each Rotary district may now add a geographic name, such as country, state, or region, as an identifier to their district number, with the RI Board's consent. Some districts already do this, but the council's vote confirms and legitimizes the practice....and now those who already do it have to go back to the Rotary board for approval!

The council considers both enactments and resolutions. This year, there are about 40 resolutions. The council is now discussing a measure that would significantly

alter the deliberations of future councils. It would create a Council on Resolutions that would meet online every year just to consider resolutions, while the Council on Legislation would be free to focus all of its time on enactments. After much debate, the council has voted to create a new Council on Resolutions that will meet once a year by electronic means to consider resolutions, i.e. recommendations, to the Board. Proponents estimate removing resolutions from the regular council could save a day of meeting, and up to \$340,000 in cost. A separate annual online council for resolutions could also improve the connection between clubs and the Board.

Lively debate going on about changing the number of representatives to the council and how they are selected. The council rejects changing the size of the council by having each zone send nine representatives, instead of a representative going from each district. The vote followed animated debate. The council rejects another measure to slim the size of the council. This one would have paired districts together, with each district alternating sending their representative to the council. Representatives would have served six years.

The council overwhelmingly approved allowing members of Rotaract to simultaneously be a member of a Rotary club. Proponents argue this will pave the way for more Rotaractors with proven leadership skills to make the transition into Rotary. Some Rotaractors are reluctant to leave their Rotaract club before they reach age 30, the maximum age, because they don't want to sever ties with friends. Similarly, some former Rotaractors find it difficult to get a Rotary club to invite them as a member. Only around 5 percent currently make the transition. Proponents say this will move that number closer to 50 percent.

In recognition that membership is the organization's highest (internal) priority, the council approved creating a Membership Committee that would be appointed by the board, with eight members serving a term of at least three years, with ability for reappointment. The RI Board argues the standing committee will demonstrate a commitment to long-term membership sustainability and growth. Rotary has had membership committees over the years, but not every year. This enactment changes that to a permanent committee.

At any legislative process such as this, humor is essential to alleviate tension and fatigue. Occasional comments from the chair and vice chair can elicit laughter. For example, yellow cards (points of order) have a way of piling up and slowing debate. So, coupled with the right facial expression, a comment from the vice chair "oh, look, another yellow card," can crack up the chamber. Council members also inject

humor: "I will be speaking in what passes for English in my part of the world." or "I'd like to speak in Welsh. But I will be speaking in English."

The council voted to keep the requirement that members subscribe to The Rotarian magazine or the official magazine of their region. The council approved a measure allowing two Rotary members living at the same address to subscribe jointly to a regional magazine. That option already exists for The Rotarian.

Of interest to some in our District, an attempt to make the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions part of the standard Rotary club constitution failed, primarily because the Council noted there is no other program as part of the Club constitution.

We break for lunch after a truly exhausting morning.

Returning from lunch, the chair has made two critical announcements. One, the council needs to pick up pace to meet its closing time tomorrow. The second, in recognition that many council members will be flying home shortly after the proceedings, business casual will be acceptable.

The council voted to remove the requirement that 10 print copies of proposed legislation be sent to district governors and council members. Proponents noted the legislation is available online now, and not having to mail out multiple copies, except where requested, will save money. This year, governors were asked if they wanted to receive a print or electronic copy, and only 11 requested a print copy.

The council has now completed all enactments. And the chair reminds the council that a motion to amend a resolution is not in order. And there was much rejoicing.

The council, tackling its first resolution, affirms that the eradication of polio is a goal of the highest order of Rotary International. By unanimous decision. President elect John Germ, past Polio Plus Chair and presenter of the resolution, was pleased as the chamber broke into spontaneous applause.

Two resolutions on environmental issues, one making Protecting Planet Earth an official program of Rotary and a Rotary official environment day were both defeated.

The council, with the assistance of the chair, has just agreed to tighter time limits on discussion, beginning tomorrow morning.

Of particular interest to our District (and PDG Tom Overbaugh in particular), a resolution to have the board officially recognize ROTEX was narrowly defeated. I

attempted to advocate for approval but the chair is severely limiting debate due to our pending workload.

The chair concludes action for the day. One more day left. Again tomorrow morning we are to begin at 8 a.m. rather than our usual 9 a.m. start.

I'll have another summary tomorrow evening after we conclude day 5.

Mark Kriebel, 2016 District 7170 COL Representative

2016 Council on Legislation - Day 5

At 8 a.m., the council begins its final day, with a moment of silence for those affected by the 6.4 magnitude earthquake in Japan.

We then begin our last half-day of deliberations, all of which we believe will be non-binding resolutions. That assumption proves false, as you'll see later in my report.

Since students in some part of the world remain in high school beyond the maximum Interact age, proponents of a resolution approved by the council asked the Board to allow students in school-based Interact clubs to remain in Interact until they graduate, even if they have turned 18.

A resolution to ask the Board to consider raising the maximum age of Rotaract from 30 to 35 fails. Similarly, a recommendation to set the maximum age at 25 also fails.

A resolution asking the RI Board to consider adding the word "family" to the statement on opportunities for service passes by the narrowest of margins, a single vote.

The council acknowledges The Rotary Foundation's centennial, in a resolution presented by the RI Board. Celebration of the centennial kicks off at the Korea Convention 28 May - 1 June and will end at the Atlanta Convention. Visit Rotary's website for more information about the centennial celebration and order your copy of "Doing Good In The World: The Inspiring Story of the Foundation's First 100 Years."

The council has passed along to the Board a request that a video message from the RI president be provided to all district conferences.

Prior to our morning break, the council gives the chair, bylaws committee, and all those involved in organizing the council a standing ovation for their efforts at creating a smooth proceeding.

After our break, a reconsideration of an enactment takes place. In a first for this year's council, the council revisited a vote from earlier in the week on allowing geographic names for districts in addition to their official district number (technically a motion to reconsider). This time, the proposal failed. But the hitch is, districts can already do this on their own. It essentially boiled down to whether the new measure would require the RI Board to act on each request, for something districts can already do on their own without explicit permission. If you read my earlier report, I indicated I thought this would be a big problem, as all districts who refer to themselves with a geographic descriptor, would have to now seek board approval when they never had before. That was estimated at \$150,000 the first year alone!

One last item to go. And before handing the podium over to the Chair, Vice Chair Michael Webb of the Rotary Club of Mendip, Somerset, England, thanks the council.

"And that's a beautiful moment," W. Duane Benton, Council Chair, a Federal Judge from Kansas City, remarks as the last vote is taken. RI President Ravi Ravindran stands up for a point of order to congratulate the council, and calls them "the best." A standing ovation for the chair and vice chair. The final bell has been rung. the council is officially over.

The council ended at 11:45 a.m., 45 minutes before the scheduled close. We did spend an hour and 15 minutes longer in deliberations this year than had been originally scheduled, due to our hour early starts on Thursday and Friday.

My reports over the past week only highlighted the enactments and the resolutions I thought would be most interesting to our district 7170 Rotarians. All in all, there were 181 items presented, some withdrawn, some amended, some amended more than once! At times the council is like watching paint dry, but at times it is an exciting, moving experience.

The general consensus was that this was the most forward thinking, revolutionary council in history. From changing membership requirements, to giving clubs the autonomy to set meeting times, number of meetings, and attendance requirements, to passing a dues increase that will give Rotary the financial sustainability to insure our viability, the 2013 council exceeded expectations.

Now is the time to begin thinking about what YOU or YOUR CLUB would like to change in Rotary. Enactments and resolutions will be due by December 31, 2017 for the 2019 council. Both of the enactments proposed by Owego and Endwell in

conjunction with other clubs and the RI board on club and membership flexibility were adopted.

I am completing this report sitting at O'Hare Airport in Chicago as I await my flight to Newark and then on to Binghamton. I hope to see some of you at the District Training Assembly in Dryden tomorrow morning.

Please know that I am always available to answer any questions you may have about the council on legislation, and I will be happy to visit your club and do a program on the council or simply talk to your club about the council if you wish. Thanks for the honor of allowing me to represent District 7170.

Mark Kriebel, 2016 District 7170 COL Representative