

**New York Catholic Forensic League
Moderators' Meeting
September 7, 2019
9:00 a.m.**

Call to order:

A moderators' general meeting of the New York Catholic Forensic League was held on September 9, 2019 at Byram Hills High School. The meeting convened at 9:45 a.m., President Thomas Beck presiding, and Treasurer Christopher Franz acting as recording secretary.

Member schools with representatives in attendance:

Bronx High School of Science, Byram Hills High School, Collegiate School, Convent of the Sacred Heart - CT, Convent of the Sacred Heart – NYC, Democracy Prep Public Schools (DP Charter High, DP Endurance, DP Harlem, DP Bronx Prep, DP Harlem Prep), Hendrick Hudson High School, Iona Preparatory School, Loyola School, Monsignor Farrell High School, Montfort Academy, Pelham Memorial High School, Pleasantville High School, Regis High School, Scarsdale High School, Stuyvesant High School, Ursuline School, Xavier High School.

Officers' reports:

President: President Beck reported that the last competition year had run well, and that the league had a good showing at the national tournament, where our league won the Cardinal Wright Diocesan Sweepstakes Award.

Tournament Director: Mr. Charlie Sloat, our tournament director, reported that last year had been a very good one for the league from his perspective as well. He made the following announcements:

- Moderators and coaches should be sure to enter all of their competitors and judges into Tabroom.com no later than the Wednesday evening before each tournament, which is now our soft, but serious, deadline. While registration will remain open through Thursday, our hard deadline, if the registrations by Wednesday night are generally as close to accurate as possible, he will have a much easier time running the tournaments efficiently.
- Similarly, coaches should be careful to strive to meet their judge quotas. If this is not possible for a given tournament, the league can be flexible, but coaches must inform the tournament director of this as early as possible so the situation can be addressed.
- Student Congress bills continue to be due the Monday of the week prior to tournament week – that is thirteen (13) days before the Saturday of the tournament.

- The league was one of the pioneers in the use of online balloting, which has now become standard across the country and at nationals. This year, online balloting generally will be expected of all judges at all NYCFL tournaments, at least for ranks, although written critique sheets will still be available. Paper ranking will also be available for those few judges who still need it.
- We continue to recycle team trophies, which saves the league a significant amount of money. Please inform the tournament director if you have trophies available to be recycled.

Treasurer: Treasurer Christopher Franz distributed the treasurer's report. The league ended the year with what is effectively a \$650 surplus, a very minor surplus from the perspective of the league's overall finances but one that indicates that we are meeting our goals of keeping schools' costs of participation to an absolute minimum while still avoiding a deficit for the league.

Speech Representative (1): Ms. Michaela Ablon offered the following observations and reminders:

- Team moderators should be clear themselves about, and should remind their judges of, the appropriate role of league officials. Board members and tab room staff run the tournament, but are not hosts and so are not the people to ask for information about the building or facilities. They are also not team managers, so judges and students should be turning to coaches, rather than tab room staff, to get team information or deal with management issues.
- New judges who were not competitors themselves must attend NYCFL training before judging rounds.
- Critique sheets should be helpful teaching tools: critiques without constructive comments, suggestions or observations about what a speaker did well and/or where that speaker might improve are not helpful and demoralize students. One-word critiques are unacceptable.

Speech Representative (2): Ms. Julie Sheinman made the following recommendations and observations:

- Even if a judge is trained, if he or she still lacks confidence, that judge should be invited by the coach to observe a second tournament.
- Coaches should set a realistic deadline by which they should drop students from a tournament: it occasionally happens that a student is running late and is still on the way to the tournament once rounds have started. This can send a tournament into chaos.

Debate representative: Mr. Jim Menick, the debate representative, made the following observations and suggestions:

- In rounds that allow student judging, student judges should always be varsity competitors, juniors and seniors, who are experienced and qualified and available to judge both junior varsity and novice rounds. There is no separate judge pool for novices, and underclassmen or students not experienced in debate should not be judging. A good rule of thumb is that a student judge should have accumulated 250 NSDA points in debate.
- Judges must write critiques and reasons for judgments on ballots. Ballots without this will be returned to the judge.

Congress representative: Mr. Jeremy Norris made the following suggestions and observations:

- The new moderated online discussion that helps students set dockets for tournaments seems to have improved the process of organizing chamber business fairly.
- As a school's judges are often assigned to judge chambers in which students from that school participate, but judges are generally barred from judging speech rooms in which students from their school are speaking, schools that have judges who are parents or relatives of Congress competitors should try to assign those particular judges to the speech pool, and their other judges to the Congress pool.

Elections:

Elections were held and the following were re-elected by unanimous consent:

President: Thomas Beck (Pelham Memorial)

Vice President: Joseph Vaughan (Scarsdale)

Tournament Director: Charles Sloat (Iona Prep)

Treasurer: Christopher Franz (Msgr. Farrell)

Speech Representative: Julie Sheinman (Stuyvesant)

Speech representative: Michaela Ablon (Convent – NYC)

Debate Representative: James Menick (Hendrick Hudson)

Congress Representative: Jeremy Norris (Xavier)

Calendar:

The league's own competition calendar for the year was then finalized. It will be posted on NYCFL.org.

Motions:

Adoption of Treasurer's Report

Moved by the treasurer. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

Training of Congress judges

It was agreed by consensus that the league pilot a policy whereby Mr. Norris will at least brief new Congress judges before a tournament, or judges will undergo more formal training similar to what is undertaken by speech judges.

Congress judge quota

It was agreed by consensus that the policy of the league would be to maintain the current Congress judge quota, but that we strongly suggest that schools bringing more than 15 competitors supply the tournament with at least a second judge.

Proposed revisions to Constitution and By-laws by Alexandra Sencer (Collegiate)

It was agreed by consensus that the Constitution and By-laws would not be amended, but that Mr. Vaughan and Alexandra Sencer would prepare a document expressing the following policies and goals of the league:

- That, when possible, Congress chambers will be limited to 18 speakers and the chambers will be balanced;
- That schools will be able to "prioritize" their Congress speakers in tabroom.com, and this information will be used by tab staff to distribute a school's speakers in different chambers to the extent practicable;
- That chambers will be instructed to choose presiding officers in such manner that no school has one of its students serving as presiding officer more than once per chamber per day.

It was agreed by unanimous consent that the rules for the Grand Tournament be amended:

- To require mandatory two (2) minute questioning periods for authorship/sponsorship and first negative speeches, and one (1) minute of questions (which may be extended by the chamber) for all subsequent speeches in all rounds (preliminaries and super session).

After discussion, changes to participation requirements for Grand Tournament eligibility were defeated by consensus.

Internet connectivity

On a motion from Vice President Joe Vaughan, the league adopted, by unanimous consent, his proposal that students competing in Student Congress, in debate categories, and in extemp be permitted to connect to the Internet for purposes of doing research during sessions, debate rounds or in the prep room (as appropriate), but that they not be permitted to communicate with coaches or colleagues outside of the chamber, debate round or prep room by messaging applications or other software.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m..

Respectfully Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris W. Franz", written in a cursive style.

Christopher W. Franz, Treasurer
Acting recording secretary
NYCFL

September 8, 2019