MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF GREATER TORONTO CHESS LEAGUE

APRIL 20, 2013

Attendees:
Michael Barron (President)
Ilia Bluvshtein (Vice-President)
Nicholas Varmazis (Treasurer)
Egidijus Zeromskis (Director of Communications)
Marcus Wilker (Secretary)
Evgeni Tobolovsky

Agenda
1. Announcements
2. Executive Reports
   a. Tournament Coordinator
   b. Director of Communications
   c. Secretary
   d. Treasurer
   e. Vice-President
   f. President
3. GTCL Awards
4. Election of 2013/2014 GTCL Executive & 3 directors at large
5. Election of Regional OCA Vice-President
6. Election of OCA/CFC Governors
7. 2013/2014 Budget
8. 2013/2014 GTCL Tournaments
9. New Items
1. Announcements

Michael Barron noted that several regular attendees at GTCL AGMs had sent regrets this year.

He also noted that the day of the AGM, April 20, was the twenty-fifth birthday of Toronto’s only Grandmaster, Mark Bluvshtein.

2. Executive Reports

a) Tournament Coordinator

Vladimir Birarov was not present, but Michael Barron noted that tournaments had run well this year, largely thanks to the efforts of Vladimir Birarov in recruiting players and teams. Special note was made of the inter-club Greater Toronto Chess League, which had eight teams this year (up from four, last year) including a team of all-new CFC members.

It was noted that the Toronto Women’s, Junior, and Senior Championships had all run well, as had the recently completed GTCL Cup (Rapid Team Championship), while the Toronto Closed had just gotten under way the previous week.

There has not, however, been a Toronto Blitz Championship this past year, despite initial interest by Hart House Chess Club.

b) Director of Communications

Egidijus Zeromskis noted that the GTCL web site had just recently stopped working, but that he was in the middle of repairs, and that it should be up again soon, if not already, depending on the browser used to access it.

He noted that the new Aurora Chess Club he has been involved with had grown to 50 members in a short span of time, including 30 playing in a CFC-rated tournament, and that Aurora Chess Club was even ready to host their first weekend tournament this July – the Aurora Summer Chess Open, five rounds, July 6-7.

Despite some concerns among Aurora members in driving downtown, Aurora Chess Club had participated in both the Greater Toronto Chess League and the GTCL Cup.

As outgoing OCA Regional Vice-President, he noted that the OCA had been quite quiet this year, he has had difficulty communicating with them, and they were late submitting funding cheques received from CFC and owing to GTCL.
c) Secretary

Marcus Wilker shared his experiences during his first year as a GTCL executive member and as an OCA/CFC board member.

In the context of the OCA, there was some discussion of an OCA boundaries committee which was to have clarified the geographic boundaries of the OCA’s component leagues. Marcus Wilker had been nominated to the committee, but it had not in fact met nor had its members even communicated.

In terms of the CFC, Marcus mentioned that Paul Leblanc (CFC rating auditor) seemed to be taking good care of the rating system. He also noted that CFC and FQE had come to terms. And that he was looking forward to new issues of the CFC Newsletter under John Upper.

He repeated Michael Barron’s comments that GTCL tournaments had gone well this year. He noted, however, that a coordinated promotion of chess in the GTA, as suggested at last year’s AGM, had not been undertaken. He suggested that the GTCL discuss strategies for improving outreach to the general public and especially of increasing women’s participation in chess.

Broad discussion of outreach strategies followed, and the following points were developed (this theme is taken up a few times – see further bulleted lists, below):

- Chess needs more active organizers and until it gets a sufficient influx of organizers will continue to suffer from a “lack of leadership.”
- The general public, which does not currently play chess regularly, is more likely to be convinced to join a local chess club than a weekend tournament. A once-per-week commitment at a club is much more reasonable in almost everyone’s schedule than a full weekend in a tournament. While two new chess clubs had grown up recently (Annex and Aurora), we still need more. And those that do exist should continue to work on recruiting in their own areas.
- Facebook is becoming an important tool for clubs to advertise with, especially to non-chess players, and especially when using well-taken photographs.

d) Treasurer

Nicholas Varmazis presented the financial results of the 2012-2013 fiscal year (revenues of $1,959 (including donations in kind and CFC memberships), net loss of $184 and cash on hand at year-end of $1,966) and addressed questions.

The membership fees paid to CFC in two lines of the Expense list were explained as being listed as “non-cash transactions” owing to the fact that GTCL was really only passing on the money to the CFC.
The net loss of $184 was deemed a reasonable extra investment in GTA chess activities, given the current balance, and indeed a continued policy of incurring a small budget deficit (as long as the balance remained above $1000) was recommended.

Some extra money in the bank was explained by the 2012 Toronto Closed having moved later in the year, resulting in its falling within the following financial year. The same is true of the 2013 Toronto Closed, just now getting under way.

The financial statements were approved, as presented.

e) Vice-President

Ilia Bluvshtein noted that his duties as Vice-President had chiefly involved supporting the President through infrequent informal meetings. He had also performed CFC rating calculations for the Olympics.

He also noted that he had attended a recent OYCC qualifier in Chatham. In this regard, and in reply to subsequent questions, he made the following points:

- While chess is suffering a natural decline (world-wide) because of competition from video games, etc., its presence in schools (world-wide) is increasing, and thus youth chess remains at healthy levels. CFC junior memberships, especially in the GTA (where both Chess’n Math and the Chess Institute of Canada are active) have been increasing steadily. (The recent teachers’ strike and its effect on extracurricular activities including chess was noted as a temporary set-back in this regard.)

- Junior players who are active in scholastic tournaments (and even the CYCC) may nevertheless not be aware of regular, organized CFC chess. Accordingly, upcoming weekend CFC tournaments should be promoted at big scholastic events. (As a first step in this direction, Marcus Wilker undertook to prepare a flyer advertising the upcoming Aurora, Labour Day, and Hart House Holidays events to send to Patrick McDonald, organizer of the upcoming Ontario Youth Chess Championship in Kitchener.)

f) President

Although a full President’s report had been sent out by email, Michael Barron repeated the main points at the meeting.

He noted that chess has continued to develop in the GTA, and he stressed the importance of Toronto on the national chess scene, citing the recent Canadian Junior run in Toronto by Chess ’n Math, and won by Alberta’s Richard Wang, as one notable example.

A possible North American Youth Championship this coming August, again by Larry Bevand of Chess ’n Math, is yet another example.
Michael Barron further recognized Annex and Willowdale Chess Clubs for hosting GTCL events this past year, but pointed out that so far only Annex has been able to accommodate the playing time required for FIDE time controls.

He celebrated the rapid development of the new Aurora Chess Club, and especially the fact that they are planning to host a weekend tournament in July.

He encouraged clubs to organize more weekend events in the Greater Toronto Area, noting that high rent costs relative to players’ entry-fee price points were a major obstacle. In this regard, clubs such as Aurora in the suburbs of the GTA may become important.

He concluded his report with remarks on the upcoming (September to July) tournament season, suggesting that it would be good if the full slate of upcoming tournaments could be decided in advance at the GTCL AGM.

In this regard, it was decided that the Labour Day tournament (as yet unorganized) be sanctioned as this year’s Toronto Open. (Nicholas Varmazis undertook to contact the Greek School at York Mills and Leslie as a possible location for the event, while Marcus Wilker undertook to confirm that Annex Chess Club could provide organizers and arbiters for the event if a suitable site could be found). Michael Barron also noted that Willowdale Chess Club is once again submitting a bid for the Toronto Senior Championship.

3. GTCL Awards

Michael Barron presented awards for recognition of outstanding volunteers who supported chess in the Greater Toronto Community to the organizers of the new Aurora Chess Club. After Egidijus Zeromskis waived his own eligibility for one of the two awards, they were presented to his co-organizers in Aurora, Bernie Prost and Graeme Knight. Each received a one-year CFC membership renewal.

Concomitant discussion of Bob Armstrong’s continued work promoting chess in the GTA, and especially his Toronto Chess News, led to his being awarded a special additional “GTCL Volunteer of the Year” award this year. He will receive a book prize.

4. Elections of GTCL Executive for 2013/2014 year

President – Michael Barron (by acclamation)
Vice-President – Ilia Bluvshtein (by acclamation)
Secretary – Marcus Wilker (by acclamation)
Treasurer – Nicholas Varmazis (by acclamation)
Director of Communications – Egidijus Zeromskis (by acclamation)
Tournament Coordinator – Evgeni Tobolovsky (by acclamation)
Directors at Large (by unanimous vote) –
Bob Armstrong, Francis Rodrigues, Alex Ferreira (or Erik Malmsten*)

*Erik was voted as an alternate, should Francis Rodrigues or Alex Ferreira not agree to have stood for election.

5. Elections of Regional OCA Vice-President for 2013/2014 year

Regional Ontario Chess Association VP – Evgeni Tobolovsky (by acclamation)

6. Election of CFC/OCA Governors for 2013/2014 year

CFC/OCA Governors* (by acclamation)

1. Michael Barron
2. Ilia Bluvshtein
3. Marcus Wilker,
4. Egidijus Zeromskis
5. Evgeni Tobolovsky
6. Bob Armstrong
7. Nikolay Noritsyn
8. Chris Field
9. Bindi Cheng**

* It was clarified that the GTCL not only nominates but elects these governors. Their election will be recognized at the Ontario Chess Association meeting and ratified by the CFC.

**The exact number of OCA/CFC Governors GTCL is entitled to this year has not been confirmed. Although last year it was 8, it was considered advisable to elect an extra Governor representing Hart House Chess Club in case the number is 9 this year.

7. 2013/2014 Budget

Nicholas Varmazis presented the proposed 2013/2014 budget, projecting revenue of $1,499 (including sponsorship in kind), expenses of $1,724, and a net loss of $225.

The budget was approved, including $200 in youth support to be provided to Chris Field to help with the Toronto Secondary Schools Individual and Team Chess Championships. An additional $100 in youth support remains in the budget, possibly for the Toronto Junior and Youth Chess Championships.
8. 2013/2014 GTCL Tournaments

**Michael Barron** outlined the tournament schedule within the GTA for the upcoming year.

Nicholas Varmazis confirmed details of the Toronto Open (Labour Day Open), August 31 to September 2, as he will be pursuing a possible site for the event.

It was noted that the bid to host the Toronto Senior has been received from Willowdale Chess Club.

Marcus Wilker indicated that Annex Chess Club would be submitting bids for the Toronto Junior, Toronto Women’s and Toronto Closed, the GTCL Cup (Toronto Rapid Team Championship), and possibly the GTCL (Toronto Premier League) if another host couldn't be found.

GTCL thus announces that bids are open for all the above events, as well as the Toronto Blitz Championship.

Upcoming GTA weekend tournaments also include the Aurora Summer Open in July and the Hart House Holiday Open in December.

9. New Items

a) Promotion of women’s participation in chess

The following points conclude the ongoing discussion of promoting chess in the GTA throughout the meeting (see previous bullet points, above):

- The recent CFC move to grant specific women’s national titles is greeted favourably by GTCL. Women players who are too few and far between already should be given recognition and support.
- In addition, women-only events are an attractive option for many female players. Finally, women’s prizes could be offered as an additional incentive and reward to women who participate in chess.

b) OCA governors’ strategy

Given the relative inactivity of the OCA this year, OCA governors from GTCL will make a concerted effort at the upcoming OCA meeting to be active in moving OCA forward on clarification, transparency, and the interests of the GTCL. In this regard, Michael Barron undertook to inform all OCA governors from GTCL on particular agenda items of special interest to the GTCL prior to the upcoming OCA meeting.