



## ZONE DIRECTORS' COUNCIL

### **Zone Directors' Council Meeting**

**August 18th, 2025 - Minutes**

**12:00 PM ET/9:00 AM PT- Zoom**

*"Serving as a connecting link in the USA Swimming Community to build awareness and trust through shared communication and education."*

Present: Zach Toothman (Co-Chair), Jamie Platt (Co-Chair), Mike Dilli, Bruno Darzi, Simran Jayasinghe, Bob Staab, Scott Shea, Jack Swanson, Thomas Ugast, TJ Walsh, Hadley Wartner

Staff: Jane Grosser, Joel Shinofield

Guests: Marc Christian (Intellisport), Kathleen Prindle (Board of Directors Liaison)

Absent: Nicole Caruso, Brianna Elliott, Lara Robertson, Melissa Hellervik-Bing, Nicole Zhang

Mr. Toothman called the meeting to order at 12:02 PM ET.

1. Additions to Agenda
  - a. There were no additions to the agenda.
2. Approval of Agenda
  - a. Mr. Darzi motioned for approval and Mr. Staab seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Approval of July 8th Minutes
  - a. Mr. Staab motioned to table and Dr. Swanson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
4. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest
  - a. No conflicts of interest were declared.
5. Announcements
  - a. Zone & Staff Updates
    - i. Mr. Staab reported strong turnout at the recent Central Zone age group meets, with nearly 1,700 athletes compared to the expected

1,300–1,400. He noted that the new AAA and 50s time standards likely contributed to the increase. A task force will be formed to review time standards and guide next steps. Ms. Grosser announced staffing changes within LSC Services: Karen Olmstead has left the organization, and Eric Stimson will now oversee Eastern and Southern Zone LSCs. Ms. Grosser will continue with Central and Western Zones. Both will report directly to Mr. Shinofield following MJ's recent resignation.

## 6. Ongoing Business

### a. Junior Officials Membership Update- Feedback Form Review (Zach/Jack/Bruno/Joel)

- i. Mr. Toothman reported that he, Dr. Swanson, Mr. Darzi, and Mr. Shinofield met with the National Officials Committee (NOC) to develop a feedback survey for the Junior Officials program. The meeting was productive, and a draft survey has been sent to Dana for review, with plans to distribute it to LSC Officials Chairs in September. Two major items emerged from the discussion: expanding eligibility to include Administrative Officials (AOs), which received strong support from LSC Officials Chairs, and removing the 12-and-under restriction, which is currently under review by Safe Sport and Age Group Development. Mr. Toothman noted that, moving forward, oversight of the Junior Officials program will transition to the NOC for continued maintenance and expansion, with Noah Berryman appointed to lead the initiative and coordinate with zones as needed. Dr. Swanson confirmed the summary, and there were no further questions.

### b. CEO Search Task Force Update- Jamie

- i. Mr. Platt reported that the CEO Search Task Force continues to make progress toward identifying final candidates to present to the Board of Directors. He commended the search firm, CAA, for consistently providing high-quality applicants and noted that the Board has been receptive to those advanced for consideration. In response to Mr.

Darzi's question about the timeline, Mr. Platt explained that there is no official target date for the next step. While there have been external pressures to expedite the process, the task force remains committed to a thorough and deliberate search to ensure the right candidate is selected. He added that earlier attempts to accelerate the process proved ineffective, leading the group to take more time to evaluate candidates in smaller, focused sessions. Although the original goal aligned with the end of the first quad, that benchmark has passed, and the current priority is finding the right person rather than meeting a specific deadline.

c. CAC Liaison Update- Tom

- i. Mr. Ugast reported that the CAC held a meeting last Wednesday, which included discussion of recent social media activity involving Michael and Rowdy. He noted that while there has been some public pushback, none of it requires concern or action at this time. He also mentioned that the group discussed questions to be submitted for the upcoming Meet the Candidates session on the 21st. The CAC's primary focus remains on advocating for the addition of three coach positions to the Board of Directors, though it is unclear whether that proposal will move forward.

d. ZDC Meet the Candidates Questions

- i. August 21st 12:30 ET
- ii. Questions to be distributed August 20th 12:30 ET
  1. Mr. Toothman led a discussion on preparations for the upcoming Meet the Candidates session, scheduled for Thursday, August 21. He noted that the candidate slate includes approximately seven to eight individuals, meaning fewer questions would be needed compared to last year. Candidates will receive the finalized questions at 1:30 PM ET on Wednesday, August 20, giving them 24 hours to prepare. Members were invited to submit proposed questions by 8:00

AM the following morning for review. Mr. Ugast suggested including a question about candidates' ability to commit sufficient time to the role. Mr. Platt inquired about the expected number of questions and the selection process; Mr. Toothman confirmed that, as in previous years, six to eight questions will be prepared, with final selection and order determined by the co-chairs. Dr. Swanson proposed asking how the Board and organization can promote transparency and rebuild trust with members amid the ongoing CEO vacancy. Mr. Walsh's submitted questions focused on bridging the gap between the national board and local organizations and ensuring strong leadership as the organization approaches the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Mr. Shinofield recommended reframing the first question to emphasize communication and alignment across all levels of the organization, not just between national and local bodies, which Mr. Walsh supported. Members agreed on the importance of communication and transparency, particularly in light of current member concerns and media coverage surrounding the CEO search.

e. 2026 Zone Athlete Summits Update- Zach

- i. Mr. Toothman provided an update on planning for the 2026 Zone Athlete Summits. He reported that the Central and Southern Zones plan to hold individual summits, while the Western Zone supports the concept and will seek funding approval this fall. The Eastern Zone will continue discussions with the Southern Zone about possible collaboration. Mr. Staab agreed that each zone's current approach was appropriate and encouraged continued independent planning, with flexibility for collaboration if circumstances evolve. Mr. Toothman concurred, noting that the zones' individualized strategies appear to be working well as planning progresses toward September.

- f. LSC Leaders Survey Results- Jamie/Marc
  - i. Dr. Christian, joined by Mr. Platt and Mr. Shinofield, presented findings from the recent LSC Leader Survey, which gathered over 800 responses from coaches and LSC board members nationwide. The survey assessed perceived value provided by both USA Swimming and LSCs across several operational and developmental areas. Results indicated that USA Swimming is highly regarded for coach education and development resources, while LSCs are valued for their accessibility and operational strength in meet management and administrative support. However, LSCs were rated lower in athlete and coach development, highlighting an opportunity for improvement. Four major challenges emerged across respondents: membership growth, facility access, coaching quality, and financial stability.
  - ii. Dr. Christian emphasized that these issues are interconnected and suggested aligning USA Swimming's educational programs with LSCs' local accessibility to create a more cohesive support system. Mr. Platt and Mr. Shinofield thanked Dr. Christian for providing data-driven insights to guide future ZDC initiatives. During discussion, members inquired about differences between staffed and volunteer-run LSCs, access to the full report, and inclusion of officials' development. Dr. Christian confirmed that these topics were included in the broader dataset and would be detailed in the full summary. Mr. Shinofield noted that efforts are already underway to address official mentoring and advocacy for facility access through coordinated national and local initiatives.
- g. September ZDC Meeting & The Summit Plans
  - i. Mr. Toothman reported that Ms. Parrish requested final confirmation of September meeting plans. The group will hold a working breakfast during the summit, with details to be finalized after Mr. Shinofield's upcoming meeting. The session is planned for Friday morning.

Members agreed there was no need for a virtual meeting beforehand, opting instead to coordinate by email due to busy schedules.

7. New Business

- a. Mr. Staab shared that he contacted Mr. Gold about ZDC reporting features, incorporating the group's suggestions. Mr. Gold is working to advance the project. Mr. Toothman thanked him and noted that the update would be useful for the upcoming term.

8. Adjournment

- a. Mr. Ugast motioned for adjournment and Mr. Staab seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Toothman adjourned the meeting at 1:08 PM ET.