

**Committee Name:** Diversity and Inclusion Committee

**Chair:** Jeff Commings

**Minutes recorded by:** Chris Campbell

**Session #6**

**Date of meeting:** 6/5/2024

**Time of meeting:** 8 pm EDT

## **Actions Taken:**

1. None

**Number of Committee Members Present: 11**

**Absent: 1**

**Guests: 1**

Present: Jeff Commings (Chair), Chris Campbell (Vice Chair), Vicki Shu, Tim Murphy, Virgil Chancy, Ally Segal, Laura Dennison, Lina Bot, Lucila Davies, Mary Jurey, Nadine Ford

Guests: Megan Shovlin (Georgia LMSC D&I Chair)

Not Present: Leann Rossi, Kenny Brisbin (VP Community Services—Ex Officio), Daniel Paulling (National Office—Ex Officio)

## **Minutes**

The meeting started at 8:04pm EDT..

1. MSA Committee meeting minutes from May 2024.
2. MSA Letter to CEO Dawson Hughes as written by subcommittee assigned to look into the establishment of USMS Clubs in conjunction with existing USA Swimming Clubs, especially in areas underserved by USMS. This letter, as reviewed during the May 2024 meeting, focuses on potential obstacles to this process. It is summarized in the May 2024 Meeting minutes. The final “as submitted” version of the letter will be provided, once it is forwarded.
3. Jeff gave an update on the proposed D&I presentation at Relay 2024 in October. Rather than a lecture/webinar, this presentation is envisioned as a roundtable discussion with breakout groups. The topics will be what D&I means to various clubs and areas, as well as gathering feedback about success stories and obstacles encountered at the local level. The amount of time that Jeff and cohost Diana Triana plan to spend addressing the attendees should be less than a third of the allotted time. The rest of the time is for discussion among the attendees.

There are some obstacles noted with the concurrent scheduling of Relay 2024 with the National Coaches Clinic (NCC). Much of the desired audience for the D&I presentation are coaches, and they will be engaged with the NCC. In addition, the attendance funding mechanisms between Relay and NCC are different, with varying levels of funding between the National level, the LMSCs and the individual clubs. NCC attendance, in particular, is funded by the LMSCs and clubs. It is also the pricier option, but registration there allows NCC attendees to attend Relay events. Relay 2024 registration does NOT include NCC participation.

4. Jeff gave an update on the status of the USMS Transgender Competition policy, and there was robust discussion. First, as a policy, there are no rules spelled out in the Rulebook, and any changes, updates or amendments are under the purview of the USMS Board of Directors. This has the advantage of allowing for more flexibility in interpretations and implementation, rather than having to go through the House of Delegates, which would allow for only annual changes, barring emergency amendments. In addition, USMS rules and policies in this regard are required to be in compliance with those of World Aquatics. It is noted that there is evolution at both levels, so changes are to be expected.

The primary issues discussed concerned review of a transgender athlete's eligibility to compete, and how to convey prior approval to compete before or as a protest/request for review is lodged. Right up front, it was noted that USMS policies will align themselves to be in compliance with the current rules and policies of World Aquatics. Currently being assessed by USMS is the establishment of a database of eligibility approval for transgender athletes to be set up prior to competition. This effort will be vetted by the Rules Committee. While there are few transgender members of USMS, some of them do compete, and the Committee is informed that it would be a great relief to them to have such a listing of preapproved athlete eligibility readily available. It would save them the wear and tear of having to prove eligibility each and every time. From an official's point of view, Virgil would prefer a formal rule in place to address any challenges to eligibility or review questions right on the spot. Vicki asked if a process to challenge any issues regarding competition eligibility in any aspect already exists, and are we as an organization, empowering anyone to point fingers at anyone they don't like. Jeff noted that if anyone desires to protest a transgender athlete's eligibility to compete, the protester desiring a review must have competed in the same event, in the same age group, and in the same same gender as the transgender athlete whose eligibility is being questioned.

The creation of a USMS preapproval process for competition eligibility is envisioned as a policy and approval authority rests with the Board of Directors. As noted above, it will align with the policies and rules of World Aquatics.

Other items of note vis a vis this topic are how well informed are any decisions made by USMS. Although the exact number of transgender members in USMS is unknown at this meeting, it is small, and, assuming that the rates of competition by USMS members as a whole are valid, it is believed that the number of transgender USMS members who compete is smaller still. Are we spending an inordinate amount of time and effort on an issue that affects very few? In addition, given the small number of transgender USMS members, how well are we doing as an organization accessing their insights, experiences and opinions?

5. Jeff provided an update on Grown Up Swimming. There are now around 34 municipalities that are supporting Grown Up Swimming leagues. The driving factor, unsurprisingly, seems to be the availability of time and space in facilities. Luci wanted to see more transparency about the reasons for why a program here and not there, noting that in the absence of information, people often assume the worst. That is a damage control headache that USMS does not need.

6. Addition of a selected demographic option to USMS registration was discussed. While the National Office was previously very busy standing up the new web platform, they are now more receptive to instituting this. Dawson Hughes prefers using the input sections in My USMS to do this, but it was pointed out that how someone looks on the outside may not be how they identify.

7. There were no VP Community Services National Updates, as Kenny was unable to attend the meeting.

Next meeting is due to be scheduled for Wednesday, July 3, 2024 at 8:00pm EDT (first Wednesday of the month, per usual). However, this may change, based upon the July 4 Holiday. Stay tuned.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 EDT.