



DEI Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: October 15, 2024, 8:00 pm EST/5:00 pm PT

Attendees

DEI Committee Members: Jenny Withycombe, Malcolm Doldron, Molly Moore and June Marshall

USRowing Board Member Liaison: Stephen Ciraolo

Guests: Ellen Minzner, USRowing Para High Performance Director

I. **Call to Order:** 8:06 PM EST/5:06 PT

- A. *Warm Welcome:* Favorite Head of the Charles/Other Fall Regatta experience/memory?
- B. Meeting Overview
- C. Approval of Prior Minutes – September
 - Motion to approve September 10, 2024 Meeting Minutes made by Mr. Doldron, seconded by Ms. Marshall. Minutes unanimously approved.

II. **New Business:** 8:15-9:00 pm EST

A. Ellen Minzner

- Discussion began by request by Ms. Marshall to Ms. Minzner to provide her thoughts on the results of the 2024 Paralympics. Ms. Moore stated that the Committee has discussed the Para recruitment pipeline and requested that Ms. Minzner discuss that as well.
- Ms. Minzner started by telling the Committee that a newsletter was sent out at 6:00 PM regarding para rowing. Ms. Minzner acknowledged that this past Olympics was the first time that a full para team was not qualified, missing PR1&2. She stated that there is currently no pathway because there is no U19 or U23 and it is really important to get the word out to athletes. The goal is to send a full team but there are no PR1 women that can qualify. Her Job is to win medals, the question is how that is done. If fail to win medals hopefully in process has improved the sport and bringing more people to para events that is how she forges ahead.
- A question was posed to Ms. Minzner if she thought that Paralympic rowing should be part of the Olympics. Ms. Minzner answered no and explained that para sports has an aspect of social justice and a quality that is inclusive and that is exactly what sports try to do – bring everyone together. She stated that the Paris Olympics was the best she has ever seen, the para story was respectful, how athletes were

qualified, the announcers were good, and the Olympic athlete village was compact like a small college campus. Paris brought out the whole community – stadiums were sold out for events.

- Ms. Minzner acknowledged that the team has been silver for along time and this year's team was very different. It was every rower and coach's first games, most of the athletes are in college, they were happy with the performance. Overall results could be better but must qualify in PR1 & 2. She has started land-based camps, her goal is "gold or bust". There has been lots of turnover, but all current athletes are committed to LA28 – there are no major injuries or burnouts. Conscious decision was made by para coaching team and staff to make decisions based on the long-term goals and engaged the athletes and took into consideration athlete circumstances.
- Ms. Moore posed a question as to what stressors cause people to not commit in the past to the senior team. Ms. Minzner described that it was how they recruited coaches, must have a four-year view instead of a one year view and must help crew have a long term vision as well. Ms. Minzner stated that the athletes must have a say in the dialogue – they must have an option to pick going to school or work. She went on to state that selection camp will be in Boston this summer and strength and conditioning will take place in Lake Placid. Coaches are part time and receive a stipend and are committed to keeping in touch with athletes.
- Ms. Withycombe asked if Ms. Minzner felt financially supported to run land camps. Ms. Minzner responded that she felt treated fairly by the USRowing budget, but she would like to pay coaches more. Ms. Minzner feels that athletes are treated the same way. She feels that there needs to be more visibility across the organization regarding para-athletes. Ms. Withycombe went on to ask if there is a need of more high-performance para training clubs. Ms. Minzner said no, there is a need to keep everyone together in Boston.
- Ms. Moore asked who should para be visible to? Ms. Minzner replied – everyone. Ms. Minzner went to state that she met with the LA28 committee last year and the program will be fully set in October. She also stated that she will collaborate with canoe and kayak organizations to discuss shared transfer of athletes between the sports. She went on to state that the reality is that rowing is not as appealing as other sports where you can earn multiple medals, rowing you cannot.
- Suggestions were discussed how the Committee could help such as guide rowers, spreading the word about para rowing to help the athletes get a voice. Ms. Minzner was happy that the Para Athlete of the Year was back because it has a lot to say about the importance of the sport.

III. **Open Issues:**

- A. OPEN # 1: Board Meeting Goldan Oars
 - 1. Ms. Withycombe provided an update regarding the Board Meeting and Golden Oars.
- B. OPEN #2: Guest Calendar
 - 1. **October:** Ellen Minzner (Molly)
 - a) Topic: Para Rowing
 - 2. November: Sarah May (Jenny)
 - a) Topic: CFO/Budget
 - 3. December: Lizzie Seedhouse (Jenny)
 - a) Topic: Communications and Marketing

IV. **Overflow and Executive Session**

- Due to time constraints, the Committee went into Executive Session and no Board Committee Updates were provided but were deferred to the November 2024 meeting.

A. Board Committee Updates

- 1. United We Row – Stephen
- 2. Finance - Jenny
- 3. NomGov - June
- 4. HR / Comp - Malcolm
- 5. HP Subcommittee - Cara, June

V. **Adjourn:** 9:43 PM EST/6:43 PM PST