



## DEI Committee

# MEETING MINUTES

**Date/Time:** August 6, 2024, 8:00 pm EST/5:00 pm PT

### Attendees

**DEI Committee Members:** Jenny Withycombe, Malcolm Doldron, Myrna Gotrell, Cara Stawicki, Molly Moore and June Marshall

**USRowing Board Member Liaison:** Stephen Ciralo

**Guests:** Rachel LeMieux, USRowing Referee/Pocock Rowing Club  
Hugh McAdam, Referees Programs Associate

### I. **Call to Order:** 8:03 pm EST/5:03 PT

#### A. Warm Welcome - Summer Rowing Highlight

#### B. Meeting Overview

- Ms. Withycombe provided an overview of the meeting and acknowledged the guest attendees representing referees for USRowing.

#### C. Approval of Prior Minutes – July 2, 2024

- Motion to approve July 2, 2024 Meeting Minutes made by Ms. Moore, seconded by Ms. Stawicki and approved by Ms. Marshall and Ms. Withycombe. Mr. Doldron and Ms. Gotrell abstained

### II. **New Business:**

- Ms. Withycombe provided an summary of the DEI Committee, its purpose and goals. Explained that the Committee has been inviting staff members and stakeholders from USRowing to speak. Ms. Withycombe opened the floor.

#### A. Hugh McAdam

- Mr. McAdam provided an overview of the referee program, its purpose of making sure there is safety and fairness in racing. Mr. McAdam described the development of continuing education for licensed referees and training for candidates and the challenges of logistics of getting referees where they need to be. Mr. McAdams acknowledged the need to improve interpersonal skills of referees and a general culture shift.

#### B. Rachel LeMieux

- Ms. LeMieux provided her history as a referee since 1990, and involvement as a referee on the national and international levels. Ms. LeMieux described the cultural shift of referees, the need for mentoring and the challenges of the

aging of referee pool and not enough replacements are becoming referees. In 1990 there were 550 active USRowing referees and now there are 350.

- Ms. Gotrell inquired as to the strategy and mechanism for DEI. Ms. Gotrell also explained that she worked in scholastic rowing and in her experience, it may be a novice's first race and interaction with the referees may make it a negative experience.
  - Ms. LeMieux explained that each region elects their leadership but not all regions are equal. For example, the Pacific Northwest has 15 active referees but need 45 because the region covers Alaska, Nevada and Oregon as well. Ms. LeMieux described that the barrier to entry is very low to become a referee – there needs to be 5 observations, must take a written referee exam, must spend 3 years as an apprentice – called an assistant referee after which the person can take the full referee exam. Ms. LeMieux acknowledged that not many people want to go through the process. There is a growing para-athlete pool but physical barriers prevent many para-athletes from becoming referees because of accommodation issues. Referee leadership is attempting to determine how to make those accommodations.
- Mr. McAdam added that each region has its own nuances and there is not a one size fits all solution. There is an aging referee corps and there are currently 450 active referees, most referees work 4 regattas. Mr. McAdam stated there are no specific DEI mandates – neurodivergent referees are a case-by-case basis, visually impaired would be challenging and ADHD could be okay. There are screenings that are performed.
- Ms. LeMieux mentioned another barrier to entry is the cost of becoming a referee. Referees are volunteers and bear all the costs for gear and travel. Ms. LeMieux has paid out of expenses of \$5,000.00. Most new referees cannot pay these amounts. Ms. LeMieux described that she attempts to talk with people and recruit at every regatta and hands out business cards. Recruitment is very much driven by word of mouth.
- Mr. McAdam stated that at every regatta he attempts to talk to people. He advertised at Youth Nationals and Youth Regional events, and there is a community page on the referee website.
- Ms. Gotrell suggested a poster with a QR code could be provided to clubs for interested people to scan.
- Ms. LeMieux mentioned Connor Lewis recognized the recruitment issue so he sponsored two phone calls that went out to every club and hosted an open call on

how to be a referee. Ms. LeMieux mentioned that Mr. McAdam needs a staff of 10 and USRowing needs to invest in referee program. There needs to be more advocacy of financial support of referees from the USRowing Board.

- Mr. Doldron stated that he would take this issue back to the USRowing Compensation Committee and the Collegiate Associations. Mr. Doldron suggested that University Alumni Associations may be a good place to reach out since former rowers are always looking for ways to stay involved in the sport and that would be a good mix of older and younger perspectives.
- Mr. Ciraolo commented that a way to increase the number of referees and to improve knowledge of rules of rowing and coaching skills, could we ask "larger" programs (thinking a club/school w say 50+ members or 4+ coaches, say) to have at least one coach become a referee (who would be "given" to larger regattas).
  - Ms. LeMieux acknowledged that some collegiate programs do pay for referees.
- Mr. McAdam and Ms. LeMieux thanked the committee for their time and left the meeting.
- Committee then debriefed. Discussion ensued, concern about the time of apprenticeship and cost and the process is not clear. Ms. Moore mentioned the Canadian system of fixed costs. Ms. Stawicki mentioned her recent experience at Mega Trials. Ms. Withycombe stated there is potential grant money could be sought through United We Row. Mr. Doldron inquired whether referees recognized in any way when they completed the program. Ms. Marshall stated she would ask a referee that recently completed the program. Agreement that referee OKR would be used as a case study.

### III. Open Issues:

- A. OPEN #1: [Olympic Review –](#)
  - Brief discussion of Olympic results. Men performed well. Lack of diversity and need for improvement for LA28.
- B. OPEN #2: Guest Calendar
  - 1. September: Amanda and Rich (Jenny)
    - a) Topic: OKRs/ Olympics & Para Olympics
  - 2. October: Ellen Minzner (Molly)
    - a) Topic: Para Rowing
  - 3. November: Sarah May
    - a) Topic: CFO/Budget
  - 4. December: Lizzie Seedhouse (Jenny)
    - a) Topic: Communications and Marketing
- C. OPEN #3: Preparing for September and the [OKR Impact Discussion](#)  
September 27<sup>th</sup> Board Plan

IV. **Overflow and Executive Session AS NEEDED**

A. Board Committee Updates – No reports were given.

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

V. **Adjourn:** 9:45 pm EST/6:45 pm PST