



DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
BUSINESS, CONSUMER SERVICES, AND HOUSING AGENCY • GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM

CALIFORNIA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

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Members of the Commission

Peter R. Villegas, Chair

Dr. Vernon Williams, Vice Chair

AnnMaria De Mars

Ronald Fiore

Christopher Gruwell

Douglas Hendrickson

Scott Wetch

COMMISSION MEETING OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, June 10, 2024

10:00 a.m. - Conclusion of Business

Location:

Junipero Sierra State Building

Carmel Room

320 W. Fourth St.

Los Angeles, CA

Commissioners Present

Chair Peter R. Villegas

Vice Chair Dr. Vernon Williams

Commissioner Ronald Fiore

Commissioner Christopher Gruwell

Commissioner Doug Hendrickson

Commissioner Scott Wetch

Commissioner Dr. AnnMaria De Mars

Staff Present

Andy Foster, Executive Officer

Patrisha Blackstock, Assistant Executive Officer

Kenneth Swenson, Legal Counsel

OPEN SESSION

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order / Roll Call / Establishment of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Peter Villegas. Executive Officer (EO) Andy Foster called roll. Commissioners Hendrickson, Gruwell and Fiore joined via video conference. Quorum was established.

Agenda Item 2 – Chairman’s Opening Remarks

Chair Villegas welcomed everyone to the Commission meeting and stated that the Commission would be trying to hold the future meetings around the state to engage with local communities. He noted that the Commission had some big events coming up and was excited for the future of the Commission.

Agenda Item 3- Review and Possible action to approve the March 4, 2024, Commission Meeting Minutes.

Chair Villegas presented the March 4, 2024, Commission meeting minutes for approval.

*Commissioner Dr. De Mars **moved** to approve the meeting minutes.*

*Commissioner Fiore **seconded** the motion.*

Public Comments

Greg Patschull spoke on posting of meeting minutes and upcoming meeting dates. No further public comments.

The motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.

Agenda Item 4- Discussion, Review and Possible Action to increase the Ringside Physicians’ and Officials’ Pay Scales.

EO Foster explained that with the temporary approval of Bare-Knuckle Fighting Championship (BKFC) in California, he felt it appropriate to update the pay scales for officials to include bareknuckle events. EO Foster noted that he had to add a position for a physician that solely did sutures. He also adjusted the travel reimbursement to mirror the CalHR rates and added recognition of BKFC championship titles as world championships. The draft pay scale can be found in the meeting materials.

Chair Villegas praised the hard work the officials and employees of the Commission during events. Commissioner Dr. De Mars agreed that officials do work hard and do deserve to have their pay scale adjusted.

*Vice Chair Dr. Williams **moved** to increase the Ringside Physicians’ and Officials’ pay scale.*

*Commissioner Wetch **seconded** the motion.*

Public Comments

Bill Henniger asked if the increase only applies to bareknuckle fights. Chair Villegas answered, yes, the increase applied to bareknuckle fights.

No further comments.

*The motion **passed** 7-0 by roll call vote.*

Agenda Item 5- Discussion, Review and Possible Action regarding the appeal of Keith Richardson, Administrative Suspension and Fine for Violation of California Code of Regulations Title 4, Section 303, issued on May 20, 2024.

EO Foster stated that this issue was settled with the fighter prior to the meeting.

Agenda Item 6 – Discussion, Review and Possible Action regarding the appeal of Lorenzo Hunt, Administrative Suspension and Fine for Violation of California Code of Regulations Title 4, Section 303, issued on May 24, 2024.

EO Foster stated that this issue was not settled. Mr. Hunt was not present in person or online. Per AEO Blackstock, Mr. Hunt was notified of the meeting, but did not confirm attendance. Chair Villegas allowed for more time for Mr. Hunt to appear, however he failed to appear.

William Gardner, from the Attorney General's office, explained that Mr. Hunt filed an appeal regarding a positive drug test from the April 27, 2024, Bare Knuckle Fighting Championships. Mr. Gardner explained that Mr. Hunt's test showed the presence of an anabolic steroid not approved for human use and showed testosterone levels about 43 times higher than the WADA threshold, indicative of synthetic testosterone usage. The Attorney General's Office provided Exhibits 1-5 to the Commission, which were admitted to the administrative record and can be found in the meeting materials.

*Commissioner Gruwell **moved** to fine Mr. Hunt \$40,000 from his purse from the BKFC event plus \$500 for the cost of drug testing, suspend his license for 18 months, and require 6 negative WADA full panel drug tests at his cost.*

*Commissioner Dr. De Mars **seconded** the motion.*

No public comment

*The motion **passed** 6-0 by roll call vote. Commissioner Hendrickson was absent from the vote.*

Agenda Item 7 – Discussion and Possible Action to Approve NanoSomiX, Inc. testing of athletes at professional events.

Vice Chair Dr. Williams introduced the CEOs of NanoSomix, Inc. and stated that they presented to the Medical Advisory Committee at the April 2024 meeting. Vice Chair Dr. Williams explained that NanoSomix proposed a research project where they would use a technology they developed that could find evidence of traumatic brain injury using biomarkers. Vice Chair Dr. Williams explained that doctors are able to clinically diagnose

concussion based on observations, but what they do not know a lot about is how quickly the brain recovers after concussive injury. He explained that knowing how quickly the brain recovers can inform how much time is needed for a through a post-fight suspension to recover. Samples would be collected from participating fighters by finger stick at weigh-ins and post-fight at various intervals.

Commissioner Gruwell asked if Commission staff would be responsible for administering the tests. Dr. Masato Mitsuhashi, CEO of NanoSomix, stated they wouldn't be responsible for administering the tests and collecting the data. The complete data would be given to Vice Chair Dr. Williams and the MAC. Dr. Mitsuhashi noted that they have been working with Roy Engelbrecht and SOCA Fights.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars asked how the Commission would make sure that fighters know that the tests are given on a volunteer basis and not required. Mr. Engelbrecht explained that SOCA Fights has hired a research manager who was a former fighter to handle their test collection. They contacted six fighters and explained how the tests work and will have their research manager follow up with participants throughout the study. Mr. Engelbrecht also offered fighters reimbursement for their participation. Commissioner Gruwell asked what the fighters are being paid and if NanoSomix is paying the promoter. Mr. Engelbrecht explained that SOCA Fights themselves will be paying the fighters \$100 cash and SOCA Fights is being compensated by NanoSomix for their work.

*Vice Chair Dr. Williams **moved** to approve NanoSomix, Inc's testing of athletes at professional events.*

*Commissioner Dr. De Mars **seconded** the motion.*

Public Comments

Greg Patschull asked if this testing was for professionals only. Vice Chair Dr. Williams stated that the clinical trial was for professionals only.

Commission Comments

Legal Counsel Ken Swenson clarified that the recommended motion from the Medical Advisory Committee was to approve the testing of athletes through the proposed study of baseline and post-fight injury.

*Commissioner Wetch **moved to amend** the motion to approve NanoSomix, Inc's testing of athletes at professional events and that participation in the study is voluntary.*

*Commissioner Dr. De Mars **seconded** the motion.*

*The **motion** passed 7-0 by roll call vote.*

Agenda Item 8 - Discussion, Review, and Possible Action regarding the delegation of amateur kickboxing and Muay Thai to the International Sport Kickboxing Association (ISKA) pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 18646.

EO Foster explained that the Commission delegates kickboxing to the International Kickboxing Federation (IKF), but about six months ago the World Association of Kickboxing Organizations (WAKO) was approved to hold six test events. Cory Schafer, formerly of Bellator, had discussed with EO Foster the possibility of the International Sport Karate Association (ISKA) becoming a delegated entity for Kickboxing in California. EO Foster explained that, if approved, ISKA would be another choice of delegation for promoters to hold events under. EO Foster's recommendation is for ISKA to hold some events and return to the Commission at a later date.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars moved to approve the delegation of amateur kickboxing to ISKA pursuant to Business and Professions Code sec. 18646. for a one-year period. ISKA is to return to the Commission after that one-year period.

Commissioner Fiore seconded the motion.

Public Comments

Toni Fossum, of IKF, asked how these new delegations will be reporting their results and suspensions. Chair Villegas stated that all requirements will be the same across the board.

The motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.

Agenda Item 9 – Discussion, Review, and Possible Action regarding the delegation of amateur kickboxing to the World Association of Kickboxing Organizations (WAKO) pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 18646.

EO Foster explained that WAKO has completed the six test events required of them by the Commission and that the events went well. He noted that he was impressed with WAKO's communication with the Commission and how hard they worked to get approval. Bill Henniger, sanctioning director for WAKO USA, thanked the Commission for working with them and stated that they are still working on becoming an official Olympic sport.

EO Foster asked for clarification on WAKO's headgear requirement. Mr. Henniger stated that all amateurs are required to wear headgear. EO Foster explained that he believes he has the authority to require headgear for athletes who have less than 5 bouts with a winning record of those five before fighters can fight with no headgear. He noted that he liked WAKO's headgear requirement for all amateurs.

Commissioner Wetch moved to grant temporary approval to WAKO for one year, and for WAKO to return to the Commission after that one-year period. During that year, WAKO is to provide the Commission with quarterly updates.

Commissioner Fiore seconded the motion.

Public Comments

Mike McAtee, of USA Boxing, noted that USA Boxing has about 7 years of data on wearing headgear and would like to submit that data to the Commission.

*The motion **passed** 7-0 by roll call vote.*

Agenda Item 10 - Discussion, Review and Possible Action regarding increasing the current fortified withholding amount that is held within the suspense account from the Covered Boxers in the Professional Boxers Pension Plan.

EO Foster explained that boxers who don't make a pension claim by age 53 forfeit 80% of their money back into the pension fund; 20% is held in a suspense account for the fighter in case they make a late claim. He explained that due to the recent coverage of the pension fund and outreach assistance received from DCA and the LA Times, the number of late claimants has sharply increased and now the suspense account has run out of funds. Matt Harrington, administrator of the pension fund at Benefit Resources, explained that in 2023 there was an such an increase in claims from late claimants that it exhausted the account. Mr. Harrington provided a proposed plan that would modify the 20% withholding to allow for funds to be taken from other sources. Mr. Harrington stated that there is currently and estimated \$1.839 million slated as a potential liability attributable to fighters that have already turned 53 years old.

Commissioner Wetch asked why the suspense account is funded in this way and if there are any other options. Mr. Harrington stated that that is how the plan documents were created and that there are other possible methods that he can provide to the Commission. Commissioner Wetch would like to see what these other the options are before making a decision.

*Commissioner Wetch **moved** to approve the increase of the pension withholding amount to 25% but suspend any additional decisions regarding the issue until the Commission has received the additional plan options from Benefit Resources, Inc. and had an opportunity to discuss them.*

*Commissioner Dr. De Mars **seconded** the motion.*

Public Comments

Greg Patschull expressed that some people were having difficulty applying for the pension fund.

*The motion **passed** 7-0 by roll call vote.*

Agenda 11 - Executive Officer's Report

a. Report of the Bare-Knuckle Fighting Championship's April 27, 2024, event that was held at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles:

EO Foster's report on the first BKFC event can be found in the meeting materials. EO Foster explained that the event went well, but he does have some notes on what can be improved. BKFC is holding another event at Pechanga Casino and will possibly hold events at Commerce Casino and in Northern California.

David Feldman of BKFC thanked the Commission for working with them on this event and mentioned that there were some small mistakes made and that referee training could be improved.

b. Budget Update for the Support Fund, the Neurological Fund, and Pension Program:

EO Foster stated that the support fund was close to \$2.2 million in deposits this fiscal year. He added that the UFC and BKFC events provided about \$340,000 in revenue. EO Foster noted that it was a good decision financially to expand the sports that are regulated. The pension fund has been paying out many claims, so it is down to \$4.5 million currently. EO Foster stated that he and Commissioner Fiore have been discussing the possibility of sponsorship deals, with that money going toward the fighters' pension funds. The new contract with C3 Logix is currently at the Business Services Office waiting on approval.

c. Update on the Specialty License Plate: AEO Blackstock and EO Foster had a meeting with the Office of Information Services on May 16, 2024, to review website designs and format in order for the Commission to take specialty license plate pre-orders. Additionally, the Office of Information Services has been working on creating marketing materials that will be distributed. The Accounting Office has established a new account code for the Commission to use to deposit funds received for the specialty license plate pre-orders.

d. Report on Pending and Proposed Regulations:

- **Pension Plan-** Office staff is waiting to see if any bill numbers associated with the Commission sunset review might impact the current proposed pension regulations.
- **Dehydration/Rehydration-** Office staff is planning to schedule a meeting with Budgets to see if the proposed regulations text will have an economic impact (if the Commission is considering some monetary penalty to be paid to CSAC).

e. Status Update of Delegated Entities:

- **California Amateur Mixed Martial Arts Organizations (CAMO)- J. T Steele:** Mr. Steele has submitted CAMO's quarterly report which can be found in the meeting materials.

- **USA Boxing (USA Boxing)**- *Andrew Banuet*: Mr. Banuet has submitted USA Boxing's quarterly report which can be found in the meeting materials.
 - **United States Fight League (USFL)**-*Joe Stevenson*: Mr. Stevenson has submitted USFL's quarterly report which can be found in the meeting materials.
 - **International Kickboxing Federation (IKF)**- *Toni Fossum*: Mrs. Fossum has submitted IKF's quarterly report which can be found in the meeting materials.
- f. Staffing update:** The Commission is operating with one Associate Analyst, two Staff Services Analysts, the Chief Athletic Inspector, the Assistant Chief Athletic Inspector, the AEO and EO. The Commission currently has two part-time vacancies. The Commission has 3 Inspector vacancies, the job posting for those vacancies closed on May 28, 2024, and the Commission will start conducting interviews in the coming weeks.
- g. Upcoming Event Schedule:**
EO Foster went over upcoming events and pointed out ones that the Commissioners may want to attend.

Agenda Item 12 - Review and Possible Action on Complaint of Ron Scott Stevens Regarding His Number of Officiating Assignments Pursuant to Selection of Officials Policy (Policy #2013-02) dated December 13, 2013, and Notice Re Criteria for Assignment of Officials dated October 2, 2015.

This agenda item was tabled.

Agenda Item 13 - Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda.

Jonathan Puu, Vice Chair of Officials for WBC Muay Thai, asked the Commission to look toward the Sports Commission of Thailand for guidance on regulating Muay Thai in California.

George Francis of Fighter's Rep, spoke about the proposal to raise the requirement of the number of fights before headgear can be removed from amateur fighters.

Zack Arnold asked why Riyadh Season was allowed to hold events in California when it appears that their partnership with the WBA and WBC violate the Ali Act.

Greg Patschull spoke regarding youth pankration and the allowance of contact to the head.

Agenda Item 14-The next Commission meeting will be held Monday, September 9, 2024, with the location to be determined.

CLOSED SESSION

Agenda Item 15-The Commission will convene in closed session pursuant to Government Code section 11126, subdivision (c) (1) for Review and Possible Action regarding Mr. Jarrell Miller's Professional Boxing License Application.

OPEN SESSION

Agenda Item 16- Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:52 AM.