

Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association
(MPSSAA)
Baltimore, MD

Minutes of the MPSSAA Executive Council Meeting
August 29, 2024

Refer Questions: R. Andrew Warner, Executive Director, 410-767-0376

Districts Represented: (District 1) Kevin Kendro, (District 2) Kathy Green, (District 3), Shirley Diggs, (District 4) Michael Watson, (District 5) John Davis, (District 6) Jeff Markle, (District 7) Amy Sexton, (District 8) Bryan Ashby, (District 9) Tiffany Byrd (late)

Also Present: Jeffrey Sullivan, President, MPSSAA
Debbie Basler, President Elect, MPSSAA
Michael Sye, Past President, MPSSAA
Donna Claybaugh, Principal Representative
R. Andrew Warner, Executive Director, MPSSAA
Jason Bursick, Assistant Director, MPSSAA
Melissa Jones, Specialist, MPSSAA
Lynette Mitzel, Secretary

1. President Sullivan called the meeting to order on August 29, 2024, at 10:02am. Twelve voting members were present to start the meeting. Mr. Warner thanked everyone for being present and welcomed the new committee members – Amy Sexton, representing District 7 and Donna Claybaugh, representing the principals. He informed the group the 24-25 coach cards were present to be taken for distribution to member schools.
2. Dr. Sullivan asked everyone to review the minutes from the previous meeting and asked for a motion. Ms. Basler made a motion to accept the minutes, with a second from Mr. Davis. The motion carried 12-0.
3. Mr. Warner provided the council with updates on key MPSSAA items. In the next few weeks a new position, communication and compliance specialist, will be announced, which will get the staff back to the original five they had several years ago. Mr. Kazmarek and Ms. Jones' positions were also elevated to PIN positions, which allowed a new contractual position to open. This person will provide support for sport and standing committee meeting minutes, social media, and compliance to name just a few responsibilities. Ms. Basler asked the salary, to which Mr. Warner replied it is dependent on the grade scale it receives. Mr. Sye asked clarification on the start date. Mr. Warner said it would depend on how long the process takes and when a potential candidate could start. There will also be an announcement for a new softball rules interpreter.
Mr. Warner provided updates to the fall championships – field hockey will play at Stevenson; soccer will continue at Loyola unless they host the Patriot League championships, therefore a contingency plan will be put in place. Mr. Warner informed the council there is now one spot

for ejection and incidents to be reported. Officials will use a form that will get sent to the MPSSAA smartsheet and then distributed to the proper athletic director and supervisor. This will also assist in the sportsmanship data collection. Mr. Warner indicated there is a new form on the MPSSAA website for recruitment of officials. Once the form is completed it gets sent directly to the association. (Ms. Byrd arrived at 10:23am)

4. The council shared important updates around the state.

District 1: Washington County started girls flag football; Frederick County is in year two of girls' flag football; Carroll County may join Washington and Frederick in the central Maryland conference.

District 2: Pickleball has been added as a new corollary sport and will also start girls flag football this season. Springbrook won the county sportsmanship award for the 23-24 academic year.

District 3: They are looking to pilot girls flag football in the spring and then potentially join the other jurisdictions offering it in the fall. They are struggling to get full-time athletic trainers hired despite having positions available. A new compliance coordinator position will be posted in the coming weeks.

District 4: Ten out of fourteen schools are currently covered by an athletic trainer. Charles and St. Mary's are still contracted positions while Calvert has full-time athletic trainers, but only in three of the four schools. They have had talks with the Ravens about girls' flag football but are unsure which season they would sponsor it.

District 5: Anne Arundel County is starting middle school athletics in the spring with boys' and girls' soccer. They are struggling to field JV field hockey teams. Howard County will be holding county championships starting this fall. Full-time athletic trainers are back in the budget for 25-26. A cost analysis was done for girls' flag football, which gained interest from the Board of Education.

District 6: Six full time athletic trainers were hired for this school year. Most of the 24 schools are going to be completing the NIAAA QPA program. Athletics will use OpenGate – metal detector system – at athletic events this year. Dr. Sullivan and Mr. Davis asked questions about the OpenGate system. Mr. Sye said it is an additional layer in providing safe environments at events. It works like the ones seen at college and professional sporting events. Ms. Diggs says they have been using a similar system. Ms. Basler asked who would be responsible for operating it and asked about training for the system. Mr. Sye informed her additional staff would need to be present as the athletic director will have other duties during games and yes there is training for it.

District 7: All fifteen schools are staffed with athletic trainers. Cecil County will start girls' flag football in the 25-26 school year and will start it at the middle school as well. The UCBAC will be changing divisions and will sponsor championships this year.

District 8: Summer engagement numbers were up this year which they believe resulted in an increase in participation for fall sports.

District 9: They currently have fifteen full-time athletic trainers on staff. Metal detectors are optional for use in their district. They are using Zelus system for wet globe thermometers in the central office. Twelve schools are piloting girls flag football. The academic eligibility policy is currently up for review. Dr. Sullivan asked about the wet globe thermometer system and Ms. Byrd indicated their athletic training supervisor monitors it. Principals representative:

Ms. Clayburgh conversed with Mr. Saunderson prior to taking over the role, but has no updates at this time. She is interested in potentially having representation from this group at the November conference. Mr. Warner indicated that time of the year is very challenging with playoffs and maybe doing something in January or February would be better.

5. Mr. Warner provided a draft of the mental health training guidance developed by the MPSSAA and MSDE. He indicated once the guidance is available and in the hands of the coaches, they will need to be trained. Dr. Rooks has put together a presentation that was recorded and will be on the NFHS website soon. Mr. Kendro asked when the coaches need to have the training completed. Mr. Warner indicated he could not answer that right now, but thinks there will be a grace period. His recommendation is to speak directly to the local jurisdictions. Mr. Davis asked if the presentation could be downloaded so it could be shown at a coaches meeting. Mr. Warner said coaches would not get an individual certificate if done that way, and tracking would need to take place to ensure every coach had taken the training. Mr. Ashby mentioned an update that is going to take place to the care and prevention of athletic injuries course, and suggested it be incorporated in there. Mr. Warner said he has not received an update on where the committee is on revamping that course. He hopes to have something by the Board of Control meeting in December; April at the latest.
6. Mr. Warner shared information that was taken from the summer district meetings that he and Dr. Sullivan conducted. The overall theme from the meetings revolved around emerging sports, financial issues, and the number of schools in regions. They found out cheer is administered differently around the state, which brought up an idea to maybe have the cheer association run the second cheer season as it would need to be run if brought under the MPSSAA. The main ideas from each meeting are as follows:

District 1

- Guidelines for Sport Committees
- Best practices for Sportsmanship
- Take into account when making decisions about state tournaments (Cost, additional resources, hotel and meals on LEA)
- State semifinal location and logistics.

District 2, 3, 5

- Officials – numbers and costs
- School hosting semifinal sites – at the mercy of who is willing to host, rotational model, home site if they are willing, potential district rotation.
- Voice with Principals particularly in LEAs where office of athletics has little interaction with Principals.

District 4

- Official association contracts
- Finances – MPSSAA sets a “here is what you get to host” and the school system virtue of their responsibilities must cover the rest.
- Various degrees of eligibility

District 6, 7, 9

- Financial – Consistency on how districts handle finances, workers pay for big tournaments, what comes to each district is more equitable, LEAs manage the balance of LEA operation and districts.

- COMAR Review – particularly appeals and misconduct policies.
- Official association fees.

District 8

- We do not need a catalyst moment to create priorities. The structure of schools differs that statewide priorities need to have implication understandings on these communities.
- Professional growth, learning communities, and chance to share with each other.
- Middle school sports seems like the wild-west.
- Small schools need help, especially with participation challenges.

Mr. Warner reviewed electronic binder information on professional development, finances, committee communication, calendar, and appeals. He talked about “what we heard/what we are saying and thinking/what are we doing.” Ms. Basler mentioned how eye opening the NFHS summer meeting was to her. She feels this organization talks about items but doesn’t move on many and she also feels there are too many challenges with districts using different rules for state level issues. Mr. Warner said he believes Maryland is doing a good job and from speaking with colleagues around the country, they all face those kinds of things. Dr. Sullivan stated it is important for this group to establish the top five initiatives and carry through on those.

7. The meeting adjourned at 11:50am for lunch and reconvened at 12:26pm.
8. Dr. Sullivan moved to the discussion and action part of the agenda. Mr. Warner reviewed the Fiscal Year 2024 finances. The Council accepted the financial report.
9. Mr. Warner invited Mr. Kendro to speak on the sportsmanship action plan. He is looking to send a newsletter and wanted the group’s input on monthly or seasonally. Most thought at the end of each season would be sufficient. Mr. Warner mentioned using the date from the statewide survey to help select the sportsmanship winners for each sport. Ms. Byrd asked how it would work if not enough data was collected. Mr. Warner encouraged the survey to be promoted to assist in data collection. It was decided the newsletter would be distributed four times a year – once during each season.
10. Dr. Sullivan provided some information about how to make communication from sport and standing committees better. The electronic binder includes an outline of the committee member’s roles and responsibilities for meetings. At the sports director meeting next week, this document will be reviewed and if support from the executive council and the sport directors, will be used moving forward. Dr. Sullivan asked if this draft could be supported. Everyone was in agreement.
11. Dr. Sullivan began the discussion on emerging sports by talking about girls’ flag football. Currently 53 schools are participating with more potentially adding in fall 2025, but the number is below the threshold to make it an MPSSAA sport. He mentioned the NFHS will have rules to govern the sport next year and currently officiating is the biggest unknown as it pertains to number of officials available to officiate girls’ flag in addition to 11 man football. Ms. Claybaugh said this has been a great addition to the fall sport offerings and has increased

participation in Frederick County. Mr. Davis inquired if anybody was going to offer at the middle school level. Mr. Watson asked how the funding was working for everyone once the money from the Ravens was spent. Mr. Kendro said the biggest financial hurdles are officials, transportation, and coaches salaries. Dr. Sullivan is utilizing initial grant funds with the partnership of the Baltimore Ravens along with Title 4 grant funding for the next three years. Mr. Warner advised the group to review the information on how to add a sport to the MPSSAA. Until the 80% threshold is met, the proposal cannot move to the Board of Control. His estimation would be at the December 2025 meeting. Mr. Kendro asked if the Ravens can still be a part of it once it becomes a state association sport. Mr. Warner said there are sponsors for sports, but a third party would not be consulted for any decision making. Ms. Mitzel was asked for an update on cheer. She regretfully informed the council due to various setbacks, the cheer association decided to not move forward at this juncture. Mr. Davis mentioned boys' volleyball as another sport where the interest is high.

12. Mr. Warner asked the council to examine the materials in the electronic binder pertaining to the COMAR update survey. He reviewed the survey results, timeline, and work needed to be done by the taskforce. The last time a review and update took place was in 2012-2013. Most of those updates were editorial in nature, and this time around, Mr. Warner wanted to get the satisfaction of the stakeholders on how the regulations are being applied. Ms. Byrd thanked Mr. Warner for the starting point and would like to know how trends are going to be identified and what the next steps will be once identified. Mr. Warner would like to have small groups review sections of COMAR and then report back. He asked for people from this group to lead small groups. Mr. Sye, Mr. Ashby, Mr. Davis, Ms. Byrd, Ms. Green, and Ms. Sexton all volunteered.
13. Dr. Sullivan asked the council for goals and initiatives they would like to see moving forward. Ms. Basler would like to review how classifications are done. Mr. Warner agreed and said that could also potentially come from the COMAR review. Mr. Kendro would like a survey on sport offerings. Ms. Green suggested a strategic planning workshop. Mr. Watson would like to discuss the flow of communication. He enjoys the monthly update from Mr. Warner. Ms. Green also added she would like to keep student leadership in focus and moving forward. Ms. Ashby recommended using Canvas as a platform for communication. It helps reduce the number of emails being received/sent and allows people to obtain information easier than searching through emails. Dr. Sullivan stated the finance committee is going to review the structure of state tournament worker pay and several other items – would this be another initiative? The group said yes.
14. Following discussion, Dr. Sullivan requested that goals and initiatives be finalized for the coming year. The Executive Council unanimously agreed to the following:

2024-25

Continue promoting the Respect the Game sportsmanship initiative, including utilization of the Sportsmanship Survey and Ejection Notification Form

Complete the COMAR review and provide recommendations for revisions and enhancements

Establish enhanced, streamlined communication and flow of information, particularly around sport and standing committees

Conduct a review of the MPSSAA financial structure, including consideration of a percentage reimbursement for state contests

Consider the opportunity for an MPSSAA student leadership council and/or other student leadership initiatives

Ongoing

Facilitate consideration and planning for emerging sports, including ongoing updates and a possible designation process for emerging sports

Longer-Term

Consider creating an updated strategic plan for the MPSSAA

Review the classification process, in alignment with the COMAR review, to ensure potential updates in time for the next classification process (Fall 2026)

15. Dr. Sullivan asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Basler made a motion, followed by a second from Mr. Sye. The motion passed 13-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 2:25pm.