

NEIL Board Meeting  
January 10, 2010

Present: Dave Kapell, Nat Budin, Chad Bergeron, Laura Boylan, Tim Lasko  
Present via Skype: Trey Reilly, Andrew Zorowitz

Non-Members Present: Anna Bradley, Alex Bradley, Renee Cyr, Peter Litwack

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"NEIL Future"

Investigation into expanding the New England Intercon convention by moving it to a new, larger location, has been quietly going on for over a year. Given the importance and consequences of changing our hotel, the NEIL Board heard from parties not on the board during the first part of the discussion. The final discussion and decision was made with just the NEIL Board.

Alex Bradley reported on his research into the Waltham Westin (WW) hotel. Laura Boylan also reported on the field trip they made to the hotel (with Chad Bergeron and Nat Budin) to inspect the area around the hotel for resources. There was an extended discussion about several issues surrounding the advantages and disadvantages of expanding the convention and changing hotels. These are some of the main points that came up during the discussion:

- The WW has a larger convention space, about 50% more total space than the CR, that we would be getting at a lower cost per square foot. The space is very conveniently divided and roomy, although the number of very large spaces is slightly smaller. It was pointed out that as we grow the convention we will need more games and more space total. There was some anecdotal evidence that GMs are preparing smaller games to fit in the rooms available at the CR. (This year, for Intercon J, we generally have a set of smaller games.) Going to a hotel with larger space would, it was argued, attract more GMs and larger games, allowing the convention to grow.
- The WW is located on Route 128 (I-95), which is more accessible for many convention attendees and is accessible to public transport, which would help increase the potential number of attendees. There is also adequate parking--the hotel generally charges for parking but we can negotiate that into the convention cost.
- One major difference between the CR and WW is the loss of the full Con Suite that we have enjoyed for several years. That will reduce the costs for the convention: the combined costs of Con Suite and hotel space is around \$6000. The WW is offering us their convention space for around \$4500. The discussions with the WW revealed the option that the hotel can set up basic food service, at a concession-stand level, at a cost for \$10-15/meal.
- In the area of the hotel, there are several different chain restaurants, several within walking distance, that can provide additional meal options for attendees. We would need to task an individual with researching the various options in the area for the convenience of the attendees. There are inexpensive options but, on average, getting food outside of the hotel could add an average of \$50 to the weekend cost for attendees which would add to the feeling that the convention is becoming more expensive. The hotel room cost would remain about the same, but breakfast would also cost more.

- It was argued that despite the space and growth concerns, we managed to successfully meet our needs at the CR. It was pointed out that the challenges of Con Suite were met, with additional volunteers and new procedures, and that the the convention could possibly handle up to 350 people at the CR. It was suggested that given the economy the convention may not grow to 350 for a few years. However, it was pointed out that we have generally filled our game space during the last two conventions. (We had a "soft cap" on attendees since Intercon I of 310 and came to that cap last year.)

- It was pointed out that we continue to get favorable terms from the CR at this point, and that we have had a long relationship with the CR. Although, others pointed out that the WW is also offering very favorable terms and a three-year lock on rates so it would be better to move now while we can get good terms and work on building a new relationship. It was asserted that we could return to the CR should the move not work out. The counter argument was made that simply because we have found a very attractive site doesn't mean we have to move next year.

- After much discussion there was some general agreement that we wanted to grow the convention but that food service would be an issue. The New England Intercon convention is relatively inexpensive for attendees, because we include food, and especially for GMs who only end up paying for a hotel room today. We would need to investigate ways of reducing costs--NEIL has a fair amount of money in reserve to experiment in this area.

- A larger number of attendees needing to leave the hotel to get food means that we will very likely have to increase break times or stagger the schedule. That does affect people needing to change between games and GMs need to prepare their games so this will need to be managed, also.

After the open discussion, the Board met alone to briefly discuss, then vote on whether or not to work toward moving the location of the convention next year. A vote was taken and a majority of the Board was in favor of moving the New England Intercon to the Waltham Westin in 2011, for Intercon K.

Tim Lasko indicated he would contact Alex Bradley to continue working with the WW, especially in identifying an appropriate weekend in March 2011. Members of the Board indicated they would start talking publicly about the potential move. A note to the entire mailing list (attendees and otherwise) would be sent when arrangements were closer to being finished.

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#### Election of New Board President and Intercon K ConChair

Prior to the meeting, there were two nominees for NEIL Board President: Anna Bradley and Dave Kapell. Anna Bradley withdrew her name from consideration and there were no other nominations made during the meeting. Dave indicated during the meeting that he was willing to work with the convention in the new hotel.

There being no other objections, the Board unanimously elected Dave Kapell as President of the NEIL Board. Dave indicated that he had not yet decided on a theme for Intercon K and would appreciate any suggestions.

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#### Other issues

- Dave Kapell and Nat Budin had proposed some small changes to the Convention Rules to more explicitly call out an anti-harrasment policy. One goal was to be able to submit our rules as an example to the Con Anti-Harassment Project (<http://www.cahp.girl-wonder.org/>). The rules had been reviewed online prior to the meeting and a few edits were received without objection. The Board agreed to approve the new rules for the New England Intercon convention and will have them published in the Intercon J, and subsequent, convention books.

- We briefly discussed increasing the size of the NEIL Board. Tim Lasko said that a wider array of voices is needed as we are looking at changes in the convention and to pursue further events. There was brief discussion but no consensus so that matter was tabled.

- Alex Bradley submitted a proposal for the Future Planning Commission, to make more clear the scope and procedures for the "NEIL Future" work that Alex Bradley has been doing. The Board thanked Alex Bradley for his work so far and the proposal but chose to table it until the next NEIL Board meeting, in March.

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#### Next Meeting

The next meeting of the NEIL Board will be at Intercon J, at 12:30 am Sunday, March 14, 2010. The meeting will include the selection of new NEIL Board members. The terms of Andrew Zorowitz and Laura Boylan are ending in March. The new President of the NEIL Board, Dave Kapell, will take over at that time and a person will need to be added to the board for that one-year term.