

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERSHIP
 CAPITOL DIVISION, USFA
 21 AUGUST 2016
 DC Fencers Club, Silver Spring, MD

2016-2017 Executive Committee

		Present	Absent
Officers			
Chair	David Ruskin	X	
Vice-Chair	Arnold Wynn	X	
Secretary	Bettie Graham	X	
Treasurer	Rebecca Chimahusky	X	
Members-at-Large			
	Aaron Ruby		X
	Raymond Finkleman	X	
	Valerie Asher	X	
Club Representatives			
Chevy Chase Fencing Club	Gayatri Bhalla-Ladd	X	
DC Fencers Club	Katelyn Keegan		X
Capital Fencing Academy	Jill Feldman	X	
National Capital Fencing Club	Not a US Fencing member club as of 8/21/16		
National Fencing Foundation	Not a US Fencing member club as of 8/21/16		
Rockville Fencing Academy	Not a US Fencing member club as of 8/21/16		
Royal Fencing Academy	Not a US Fencing member club as of 8/21/16		
Royal Imperial Fencing Club	Not a US Fencing member club as of 8/21/16		
Terrapin Fencing Club	Not a US Fencing member club as of 8/21/16		
Z-Parta	Not a US Fencing member club as of 8/21/16		

David Ruskin, Chair, Capitol Division, US Fencing, called the meeting to order at 1:17 p.m. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Capitol Division Annual Membership Meeting of the 2016–2017 fencing year.

Club Development and International Travel Grants

The Division awarded 12 individual international competition grants in 2015-2016. No requests were received for club Developmental Grants.

Treasurer's Report

At the end of the fiscal year (July 31, 2016), the Division had a bank balance of \$26,985.04. The profit from the Cherry Blossom Open was approximately \$3,500. The Treasurer's Report was accepted.

Nomination of Officers for the 2016-2017 Fencing Season

The Nominating Committee proposed the following officers for the 2016-2017 season:

Chairperson: David Ruskin
Vice-Chairperson: Arnold Wynn
Secretary: Bettie Graham
Treasurer: Rebecca Chimahusky
At-Large Members:
Valerie Asher
Raymond Finkleman
Aaron Ruby

The vote was unanimous to accept the slate.

Lewis Slotter's Farewell Address

Lewis Slotter will be moving to Florida. He has been a very dedicated member of the Capitol Division for 19 years. In addition to his love of fencing, he has played a key role in the Capitol Division fencing events as a referee, bout committee manager, referee wrangler, and mentor to aspiring bout committee managers. Lewis provided the assembled group with some of his thoughts about how to make the Division even better. He focused on the need to develop a cadre of tournament officials and to provide opportunities for them to grow and improve their skills. See the appendix for his complete farewell address. David presented Lewis with an engraved pocket watch and flask. Everyone expressed their appreciation for Lewis' service to the Division and wished him well.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Appendix

Lewis Sloter's Farewell Address to the Capitol Division

Dear Capitol Division Members, Coaches, Club-mates, and Friends:

The time has come for me to move out of the area and on to a new state in my life. I regret having to leave, but I also consider myself very fortunate. Within this small (but mighty!) division I have felt the love of fencing fostered in every beginner, regardless of age. That love was oftentimes honed to a competitive edge, and then success. The ensuing confidence returned to local fencing in the form of coaching and officiating. To help continue this tradition, I offer some lessons I have learned from nineteen years being a member, a fencer, and an officer in the Capitol Division.

The first is that a cadre of tournament officials has to be developed. The clinics, written exams, and practical observations required by the Fencing Officials Commission (FOC) are final tests, not development programs. Clubs need to start adding formalized referee training to their practice regimens. This is crucial in foil and sabre where there always seems to be more demand than supply.

The subsidy for clinic and test expenses is a good start, but more could be done. After referee certification, there should be some incentive to continue referee development. The problem is that referee rating advancement is done at national events, and therein are many hurdles. The first is being hired, for most events the FOC contacts already proven referees. The only real entry points for a new referee are walking-on at an event or committing to a full-time schedule at the July Challenge, where need is its greatest. Neither of these promise the workload and observation the new referee needs. In fact, there is a "make or break" approach that puts the new referee in the high-pressure situation of youth events where the emotions of competitors, coaches, and parents can flare-out spectacularly. While the heat and pressure may hammer a new referee into shape, I can attest that there will be an underlying brittleness; which is not helped by the long hours, bad food, and worse pay.

The Division sponsoring referees to travel to national events and larger regional tournaments would help develop the home cadre. While in the course of their own development they can see how the overall officiating of the sport is progressing. It also allows the new referee to make connections. In my experience I have learned more conversing at breakfast and in the bullpen with other referees than ever with an overburdened FOC observer. There are already grants in place to help the traveling elite athletes. While the accomplishments of our fencers bring glory and attention, it is referees who preserve the integrity of the sport—especially in our small division.

Furthermore, a tournament may run on the feet of the referees, but the role of the meet manager should not be ignored. In particular because the US Fencing website is notoriously difficult to navigate and qualifier guidelines are no longer prepared and disseminated by the national office. To help, I have run clinics before, and will leave to the Capitol Division my course materials, but only so much can be taught in a classroom. I suggest an apprenticeship program be set up wherein those interested in meet managing can pair themselves with an experienced official and learn how a tournament is run. Just as referees should be encouraged to travel to national events, apprentice tournament officials should also be encouraged to work as volunteers for the National Bout Committee.

As I go, I offer long overdue plaudits. First and foremost to Dr. Bettie Graham who embodies selfless dedication to the sport she loves. With thoroughness she can navigate the bureaucracy of fencing and with grace she keeps up the morale of tournament officials by being our go-for. On behalf of our stomachs and our spirits, thank you Bettie. As far as the cadre of referees who have worked with me in my development and for me as tournament officials, it's too long to list

here. Ladies and gentlemen of the referee cadre, you know who you are, and to say that you have my unending admiration and gratitude is hardly sufficient given your contributions to the sport.

Finally, to honor all my past affiliations I offer congratulations to Wayne McCullough and all University of Maryland fencers past and present. You have taken a small recreational club and made it a competitive force regionally and nationally. Congratulations to Ray and Jean Finkleman of Chevy Chase Fencing Club. There, on the second floor of an unassuming rec center where set-up and take-down took almost a half-hour out of training time, you forged an Olympian. To DC Fencers Club, all due plaudits to Coaches Janusz Smolenski and Robert Suchorski and to club-mates Valerie Asher and Jim Adams. Tucked away in an industrial park that appears on few maps you have made World Champions. All the while, never losing the fun and bonhomie of a raucous (and sometimes weird!) extended family.

Yours in Fencing,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lewis Slotter". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lewis Slotter