

2025 U.S. Masters Swimming

Committee Name: Northwest Zone

Committee Chair: Jill Wright

Minutes recorded by: Sally Dillon

Date/time of meeting: December 1, 2025, 6 pm MT

Actions taken - none

Number of committee members present: 18 **Absent:** n/a

Committee members present: AK-Kent Hamilton; IW-Paige Buehler, Dave Cabrey, Margaret Hair, Robert Heath, Alex McAnally; MT-Mark Brooke; OR-Christina Fox, Sandi Rousseau, Joy Ward, Paul Windrath; PN-Linda Chapman, Sally Dillon, Diana Hermanson, Dan Underbrink; SR-Jill Wright; UT-Aaron Norton, Jerry Trieman

Guests: Rick Howell

The meeting was called to order at 6 pm MT.

A. General Business

1. Actions taken between meetings:

- a. Reimbursement of USMS Annual Meeting expenses. A request submitted by the MT LMSC for reimbursement of delegate Maureen Porter's expenses was approved by the LMSC chairs via email. Discussion during this meeting regarded the process. It was noted that Maureen did not share a room, and that being her choice, the zone would not fund the extra half-room rate. Linda said that just prior to the Zone meeting she sent an email to the Zone LMSC Chairs which showed an adjusted reimbursement amount to the MT LMSC (\$986.68) to cover Maureen's registration, travel, and lodging. Paul suggested MT ask USMS to cover Maureen's costs, since Dawson Hughes had indicated some time ago that USMS can do that. Sally noted that our Zone currently collects 50¢ per swimmer from all our LMSCs each year – specifically to provide funds for this type of need (as well as support to attend clinics). She also noted that USMS is incurring significant legal costs, so might not be willing to take on this expense.
- b. Approval of the 2025 NW Zone SCM Championship: With the November meet in Federal Way canceled, Oregon offered to host a SCM meet in late January at the Multnomah Athletic Club in Portland. The bid was approved by the LMSC chairs via email. (More discussion below in New Business section).
- c. Annual Meeting minutes: The August 21 meeting minutes were approved by the LMSC chairs via email and are posted on the Zone and USMS websites.

2. Chair's report: Jill Wright referenced her report, which was included in the latest Zone Chatter as follows: After the USMS annual meeting was Relay in October. Linda Bailey (from SAWS) and I went from Boise. She had a great time, met a lot of people, and learned a lot. I learned how to glue jewels on hand paddles to show sparkle in the pool. Linda led a fun Halloween workout with small pumpkins: pitching them, holding them under the water, using them as kick boards. We learned how to have fun in workouts while still getting a good workout. We learned how to utilize volunteers to help our club grow. We learned that in all the things we heard to try to use one thing in the future.

We are grateful to Oregon for bidding on the SCM Zone Championship. There will not be a 2025 Championship (see below under Zone news). The 2026 SCM Championship will be held in January 2026 in Portland, OR. Many thanks to Paul Windrath for the work he is doing in Oregon.

As a reminder - start thinking about the 2026 Zone Championships. Schedule is: SCY- PN, LCM-open to all, SCM-OR, OW-UT.

3. Finance report: No report submitted. Treasurer Ken Winterberger is apparently traveling (per Jill).

4. Website: Dave Cabrey has kept info on the website up to date. He noted that he will be traveling in Australia Jan 20 through Feb 10 and out of touch during that time.
5. Records: Steve Darnell reported via email to Sally that all Zone records are up to date. She informed him that the Federal Way meet was canceled (he didn't know).
6. Zone Chatter: Christina Fox prepared another excellent issue of the Zone newsletter. She thanked the chairs for submitting their LMSC information during the busy holiday week.
7. Secretary: Sally Dillon prepared and distributed minutes from the last meeting. She also thanked the LMSC chairs who reported changes to their leadership teams; the spreadsheet and email lists have been updated.
8. NW Zone At Large Director: Rob Heath referenced the following report that was in the Chatter: USMS is still battling multiple legal challenges to our Eligibility Policy, as multiple states have now hit us on both sides of the aisle. Texas, Florida, California and New Jersey have all initiated actions against USMS, ranging from discrimination to fraud. The Board has had to approve additional legal fee appropriation to cover our fight in this battle. It appears at this point that Federal Way will no longer be available to host our future meets based on the revised policy against discriminating against trans-women.

The update to our sanction process is nearing completion, with the Beta version showcased at the recent Relay event in Kansas City. The feedback received was very positive from those sitting in on the review. We now can post meets on the USMS site with an "upcoming event" designation until the sanction can be completed.

The Board is also currently involved in setting the budget for 2026, establishing criteria and standards for modifying the rule book, and determining the future of One-Event swimmers for pool meets. While this is set up for open water, which is likely to remain an option, allowing this to be used in pool meets has created multiple issues. The benefit USMS has received from this option is overwhelmed by the drawbacks because of this policy.

Overall USMS membership numbers for 2026 are slightly behind our budgeted forecast. Much of this is due to the Eligibility issues we face nationally. Again, both sides of the issue are declining to register for USMS in the 2026 cycle, based on the feedback we are getting. Grown Up Swimming membership is up again in 2025-2026, and we project turning a profit on that venture in 2026. College Club Swimming (CCS) registrations are up as well.

The next USMS BOD meeting is scheduled for Dec 15, 2025, at 4:30 PST.

If anyone has specific questions or input relating to any of the Board activities, I'm happy to help. Just email me your questions or comments to Rob at: boatyme@hotmail.com.

Paul asked about progress regarding the creation of a subcommittee to address Dawson Hughes' process of submitting times to World Aquatics that were illegal. Rob thinks the decision will come up soon.

9. NW Zone Championship events update: Jill reminded all that the bids for 2026 events were due Dec. 1. None had been received. Paige shared info from the website about the Zone meet rotation:
SCY – Pacific Northwest – Linda said a location for the meet has not yet been determined.
LCM – Open to any LMSC (typically June through August)
OW - Utah – Aaron said none of Utah's OW events are USMS sanctioned so they won't be hosting. Other LMSCs are welcome to bid to host an OW Zone Championship
Paige asked about having a Zone Championship take place at a dual sanctioned meet. The Wenatchee meet was discussed and input from others is that it runs too long and attracts only about 30 Masters swimmers.

Discussion regarding event sites: Aaron said Utah's SCY championship meet is in November and UT LMSC is celebrating an anniversary in 2026. He'd like to host a meet during the year. Linda noted that November is "outside" the short course season for 2026.

Jill set a new date for submission of Zone Championship bids. It will be January 1, 2026

10. New Business

- a. Do we end up with two SCM championships in 2026. They are traditionally held in the fall, but a January event has just been approved. Paige suggested the January meet could be called the Zone championship – without a “year” attached. Or could we call it the 2025 championship – postponed? Once bids are in, the LMSC Chairs will hash this out.
- b. King County Council issue with meets at KCAC: Linda reported that PNS (kids) is perusing the “recognized meet” path for meets lower than sectionals. She’s not sure this would work for USMS. It’s not clear if PNS is paying separate liability insurance. Aaron said the Huntsman Masters team has been hosting the Huntsman Senior Games for years (it is a recognized meet). Linda said the PNS chair (Chad Winkle) will be meeting with Dawson next week.
- c. Letter to King County Council: Oregon member Rick Howell shared a letter that he sent to the council recently. It is copied below these minutes. He has not yet received a reply and will let us know if/when he does.
- d. Rumor about closing KCAC: Rob heard that either the county or Federal Way wants to tear down the pool and build a park. None of the PNA members on the call know about this. Sally promised to reach out to Steve Freeborn, who will know if there is any truth to this rumor.
- e. Set a date for the next meeting: Monday, March 2 at 6 pm Mountain time.

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm MT.

LETTER FROM RICK HOWELL – RECENTLY SENT TO THE KING COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Hello,

I am a Masters swimmer who was very much looking forward to competing at the Short Course Meters meet scheduled for November 29–30. I was disappointed to learn that the event was canceled. To keep my training and competition goals on track, I’ve had to travel to Long Beach, CA, to participate in different meet.

When I learned that the reason for the cancellation involved a conflict between the pool facility’s policy regarding transgender athletes and USMS policy, I felt both frustrated and confused. Canceling a sanctioned meet affects a wide range of people – athletes, officials, staff, and volunteers – and undermines the strong swimming community we’ve built here.

Having spent over 40 years in Human Resources, I have always been a strong advocate for equity and inclusion. I fully support Title IX and the advancement of women’s athletics. However, I believe fairness in competition must also be preserved. The physiological advantages that come from male puberty – such as muscle mass and lung capacity – cannot be fully mitigated, even after transition.

This is not a position taken out of intolerance, but rather one grounded in fairness and biology. Even Caitlyn Jenner, herself a transgender woman and Olympic champion, has said, “It’s biology – it is not about exclusion or not being tolerant.”

I urge you to review and reconsider the current policies that contributed to this cancellation. If this issue remains unresolved, I’m concerned that future meets – including USMS, USA Swimming, NCAA, and even high school competitions – may avoid using the Federal Way facility altogether.

Thank you for taking the time to listen and for your continued dedication to supporting competitive swimming opportunities for all athletes.

*Sincerely,
Rick Howell*