

MARYLAND STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

MINUTES - WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2018

On Wednesday, February 21, 2018, the Maryland State Athletic Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Arnold “Arnie” Dansicker at 2:10 p.m.. Present were the following: Chairman Dansicker; Commissioner Charles “Chuck” Gast; Commissioner Lenny Moore; Commissioner David Norman; Commissioner David Shull; Patrick Pannella, Executive Director; Eric London, Assistant Attorney General and Counsel; and Dreama Anderson, Administrative Specialist.

MOMENT OF SILENCE PASSING OF DR. WILLIAM A. ANDERSON - JANUARY 31, 2018

The Commission held a moment of silence in honor of Dr. William A. Anderson, an accomplished musician and career educator who passed away on January 31, 2018 at the age of 79.

Executive Director Pannella stated that Dr. Anderson is the father-in-law of Commission Administrative Specialist Dreama Anderson and the father of a close friend of the Commission, Jose Anderson.

Mr. Pannella reported that he and Commissioner Shull represented the Commission at a memorial service held for Dr. Anderson.

Mr. Pannella noted that Dr. Anderson skillfully played several musical instruments, was particularly well-known for his many accomplishments as a saxophonist, and had over 40 years of dedicated service with the Maryland State Department of Education as an educator and compliance officer.

The Commission expressed its deepest condolences to the family of Dr. Anderson.

Ms. Anderson thanked the Commission for its strong support during this difficult period of time for her family.

MOMENT OF SILENCE PASSING OF SCOTT WAGNER - FEBRUARY 16, 2018

The Commission held a moment of silence in honor of Scott Wagner, who passed away on February 16, 2018 at the age of 49.

Executive Director Pannella stated that Scott Wagner was the key figure in organizing the over 50 “Ballroom Boxing” professional boxing events promoted by the late Michael “Mike” Wagner from 1995 to 2010 and held at Michael’s Eighth Avenue in Glen Burnie, Maryland.

Chairman Dansicker described Scott Wagner as one of the most influential individuals involved in club level boxing promotions in the history of boxing in the State of Maryland, noting that Mr. Wagner “enjoyed competitive fights” and “thought more about others than himself”.

Mr. Pannella reported that, throughout the course of “Ballroom Boxing” events being held at Michael’s Eighth Avenue, Scott Wagner arranged for a significant number of American veterans, and particularly disabled veterans, to be special guests of the promoter and to be recognized in the boxing ring.

The Commission expressed its deepest condolences to the family of Scott Wagner.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

The January 31, 2018 Commission minutes, which were previously distributed to all Commission members for review, were discussed.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Gast, seconded by Commissioner Norman, the Commission voted (5-0) to approve the January 31, 2018 minutes of the Maryland State Athletic Commission.

BALTIMORE CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING LLC RENEWAL OF PROMOTER LICENSE

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report.

Patrick E. Parents, Jr., the promoter's representative for Baltimore Championship Wrestling LLC, recently applied to renew the promoter license for Baltimore Championship Wrestling LLC with the Commission as a promoter of professional wrestling events in the State of Maryland. This promoter typically promotes its wrestling events under the advertising name of Baltimore Championship Wrestling (BCW), and has held BCW wrestling events in both Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County. Commissioner Moore and Mr. Pannella interviewed Mr. Parents as a condition of license renewal. They reviewed the license application and corresponding documentation submitted by Baltimore Championship Wrestling LLC, and were satisfied that this applicant complies with the Commission's licensing requirements.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Moore, and seconded by Commissioner Norman, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the renewal of the license of Baltimore Championship Wrestling LLC as a promoter.

APPROVAL OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING EVENTS

Executive Director Pannella led a Commission discussion in regard to the professional wrestling events currently scheduled to be held in the State of Maryland.

Mr. Pannella provided the Commission with the current schedule of Commission-sanctioned wrestling events for calendar year 2018.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Norman, seconded by Commissioner Shull, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the following professional wrestling event being promoted by Event Services, Inc. a Wholly-Owned Subsidiary of World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., advertising as NXT:

Professional Wrestling Event
Saturday, April 21, 2018 - 7:30 p.m. Starting Time
APG Arena at Harford Community College
401 Thomas Run Road - Bel Air, Maryland
Promoter: Event Services, Inc. a Wholly-Owned Subsidiary of
World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., advertising as NXT.

MARYLAND STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
YEAR 2017 FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENT

Executive Director Pannella reported that the Year 2017 annual financial disclosure statement for all commission members and all State employees who are required to do so must be received by the Maryland State Ethics Commission not later than April 30, 2018.

PROFESSIONAL FIGHTER’S LEAGUE (PFL)
PROMOTER OF PROFESSIONAL MMA EVENTS/TOURNAMENTS

The Commission held a discussion in regard to the information provided by the Professional Fighter’s League (PFL) in the form of a “League Overview” document, explaining the PFL’s tournament format of MMA contests and accompanying rules.

Executive Director Pannella reported that the PFL has expressed an interest in obtaining a promoter license from the Commission to hold MMA events in the State of Maryland consisting of MMA contests in the quarterfinal rounds and semifinal rounds of a PFL tournament.

To determine if the PFL tournament format is compatible with Commission regulations; the Commission reviewed the PFL “Playoff Format”; specifically, the Commission reviewed the PFL quarterfinal rounds and semifinal rounds – with MMA contests in the quarterfinal rounds consisting of two five-minute rounds and with MMA contests in the semifinal MMA contests consisting of three five-minute rounds.

Executive Director Pannella noted that, in a concerted effort to reduce the number of medical suspensions imposed by an athletic commission due to MMA contestants receiving cuts and lacerations, PFL rules do not permit elbow strikes on the ground in its MMA contests.

The Commission agreed that, with regard to every MMA contestant proposed to compete in a PFL tournament to be potentially held in the State of Maryland, it

would have to be comfortable in determining that each MMA contestant has the MMA skills, and is physically fit, to participate in the maximum number of scheduled rounds for the two respective MMA contests in which the MMA contestant may be competing.

The Commission discussed safety and fairness considerations relating to MMA contestants potentially competing in two MMA contests in one tournament event. The Commission referenced the example of two MMA contestants being scheduled to compete against each other after one MMA contestant won his or her first contest in a relatively easy manner and the other winning MMA contestant's first contest was physically demanding.

Mr. Pannella reported that Dr. John W. Stiller, M.D., Commission Chief Physician and Neurologist, is currently reviewing the PFL's tournament format of MMA contests and accompanying rules. Mr. Pannella noted that Dr. Stiller has indicated that he will be available to attend a future Commission meeting to discuss this matter as it relates to the medical ramifications of what is being proposed.

Counsel London noted that Commission regulations call for the Commission to approve the total number of rounds that a promoter is authorized to schedule for a MMA contest, with a non-championship MMA contest not exceeding three rounds in duration and a championship MMA contest being five rounds in duration.

Commissioner Norman asked Mr. Pannella to make an inquiry to licensed MMA promoter John J. Rallo, III, seeking Mr. Rallo's opinion about the feasibility and possibility of MMA as a sport either partially or fully morphing into MMA contests being held through tournament competition.

The Commission consented to discuss this matter further at its next scheduled meeting.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Dansicker had nothing to report, electing to defer his comments until the Commission's discussion of potential venues for Commission-sanctioned events.

COUNSEL’S REPORT

Counsel London reported that all Commission members are currently making their obligation set forth by the Maryland Legislature to attend two-thirds of scheduled Commission meetings in a rolling year.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Executive Director Pannella provided with the following report in regard to the Commission tour of the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Events Center, which is scheduled to occur on March 28, 2018.

Mr. Pannella initially made contact with Dr. Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, the UMBC President, to apprise him of the Commission’s interest in touring the new facility. Dr. Hrabowski consequently arranged for the upcoming Commission tour.

The first college or university venue in the last 20 years in the State of Maryland to permit a professional boxing event to be held on its campus was Coppin State University, where a boxing event was held on July 20, 2013 when future junior lightweight world champion boxer Gervonta “Tank” Davis of Baltimore, Maryland competed in the featured boxing contest.

The Commission worked closely with the Coppin State University administration in planning the logistics related to holding the July 20, 2013 boxing event. There were no regulatory issues or concerns pertaining to this boxing event.

Coppin State University and UMBC are both institutions of higher education which are within the University of Maryland System.

VENUES LOCATED IN MARYLAND FOR THE HOLDING OF BOXING, MMA AND WRESTLING EVENTS

Chairman Dansicker stated that the Commission makes every effort to assist promoters and promoter applicants in finding suitable venues located in the State of Maryland for holding boxing, MMA and professional wrestling events.

Chairman Dansicker recommended that Executive Director Pannella: (1) prepare a Commission document listing relevant questions and points for discussion purposes when a venue located in the State of Maryland is being evaluated by a promoter and/or the Commission with regard to holding successful boxing, MMA and professional wrestling events; and (2) make inquiry to Commissioner Larry Hazzard of the New Jersey Athletic Control Board concerning any considerations or agreements, if any, that venues located in the State of New Jersey have given, or made, relative to the holding of combative sports events.

Mr. Pannella noted that the Commission has in place written correspondence which, for many years, it regularly sends to all promoter applicants and which includes logistical points for a promoter to consider when selecting a venue for a proposed boxing, MMA or professional wrestling event.

Mr. Pannella stated that, as requested by Chairman Dansicker, he would prepare a separate document listing relevant questions and points for discussion purposes when a venue located in the State of Maryland is being evaluated by a promoter and/or the Commission with regard to holding successful boxing, MMA and professional wrestling events.

Commissioner Gast recommended that the Commission list on its website a link to relevant contact information for each respective venue located in the State of Maryland which may be suitable for holding boxing, MMA and professional wrestling events.

Mr. Pannella strongly endorsed Commissioner Gast's recommendation, noting that, after receiving written permission from each respective venue to be listed, he would move forward with establishing the referenced venue links on the Commission website.

SCHEDULED COMMISSION MEETINGS

The Commission held a discussion regarding future Commission meeting dates. The Commission agreed to hold the following meetings on the following dates and times in the Third Floor Conference Room, 500 North Calvert Street in Baltimore, Maryland:

Wednesday, June 13, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.;
Wednesday, July 18, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.; and
Wednesday, August 15, 2018 at 2:00 p.m..

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Gast, and seconded by Commissioner Shull, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the meeting at 3:19 p.m..

Patrick Pannella
Executive Director