

**Baseball BC Summit
DRAFT SUMMARY
February 28, 2015
Douglas College, New Westminster**

John Berry opened the meeting at 10:05.

John introduced the Baseball BC Board members present...

- Ted Hotzak
- Peter Stoochnoff
- Doug Kelly
- Steve Gustavson
- Andrew Grant
- Tim Clarke – arrived later

John then introduced the Baseball BC Staff...

- David Laing – Executive Director
- Scott MacKenzie – Programming and LTAD
- Shawn Schaefer – Grass Roots

John introduced the special guests in attendance...

- Bill Woodley – viaSport Vice President
- Eric Sinker – viaSport Coaching Lead

John spoke to the agenda (Open by design)

- will talk about the background and why we are here
- will work through the Road Ahead paper that was circulated
- will talk about next steps

John asked that the assembly speak frankly and respectfully so that we can have constructive dialogue.

John committed to summarizing the meeting and circulating notes related to the discussion.

Background – John Berry

This meeting is precipitated by a decision by BC Minor Baseball, our largest member at present, to withdraw from Baseball BC membership. To put that into context, some perspective is appropriate,

Baseball BC is the Provincial Sports Organization (PSO) for baseball in the province, recognized as that by the provincial government and Baseball Canada. Structures of PSO's vary considerably among sports. Ours is a federated model. Our voting membership is comprised of seven (with BC Minor) province wide organizations, who in turn have members who may be local associations or individuals, and who they represent as members of Baseball BC. The current board composition includes 12 directors, one associated with each of our six members and 3 associated with BC Minor. We also have three independent board members.

A question from the floor about who the member organizations are

BC Minor

Little League

Babe Ruth

Premier

Umpires

Junior

Senior

Follow up question about numbers with each member...BC Minor and Little League hold the majority of the current membership.

LMBA was also asked about...they are an associate member of Baseball BC.

Our structure was amended in 2006, resulting in today's structure.

-In 2005 there were only 4 members (BC Minor, Junior, Senior and Umpires)

-BC Minor was a major driver of the changes

-The changes included a board elected by the members. Previously the board was mainly self-elected, and thus not accountable to its membership

-A structure that welcomed all province-wide organizations including Little League, Babe Ruth and the PBL...they joined the membership as they'd indicated.

-BC Minor was instrumental in bringing them in, supporting and leading the concept that we are all stronger if we cooperate where we can agree, and have a forum to discuss and resolve issues where we may not. It was never suggested we were moving to a BC Soccer or BC Hockey Model. We are not sure where that came from as it is not possible.

- We also agreed to operate on a basis that was member directed. BC Minor was clear that it wanted influence but not control; their leaders of the day understood and emphasized that they wanted to collaborate and could not succeed in trying to exercise control
- In many ways, the structure has worked well
- Decisions have been consensus based
- Our board and its officers have been jointly nominated by all members, including BC Minor, for 9 years in succession, and acclaimed, including in June 2014
- Board and AGM decisions almost always unanimous. Committees also consensus based.
- No member organization or Board Members expressed concern at either the AGM or a board meeting about organizational direction for 9 years.
- Agreed in areas like Finance, High Performance, Grass Roots approach, Female Baseball, ect.
- Representatives of different organizations, including BC Minor, expressed publically and privately, their support of Baseball BC and its programs and direction

There have been concerns and issues between our members. Our consensus based model has respected jurisdiction. We can facilitate but not force resolution of issues

-Example – in early 2014, Little League BC approached John Berry about the BC Minor action in forcing the “all or nothing” approach to membership with White Rock and New Westminster, who were jointly members in both Little League BC and BC Minor. When it was discussed and suggested that Baseball BC doesn’t have jurisdiction in matters between two member organizations, Little League BC understood. John did hold brief discussion with BC Minor leadership and was told it wasn’t any of Baseball BC’s concern.

-Example – BC Minor issues with the PBL being linked to Baseball BC High Performance in July / August of 2014. John tried to facilitate, but BC Minor wouldn’t meet with the PBL without preconditions. The Baseball BC Board was advised that the BC Minor Directors on the Baseball BC Board would not attend the September Baseball BC Board meeting if John Berry didn’t remove Ted Hotzak. When John declined to remove Ted (which would have been contrary to Baseball BC’s By Laws), BC Minor subsequently took actions against Baseball BC, starting with working less with Baseball BC, then threatened to withdraw and then issued withdrawal notice recently effective March 31.

All the while we have offered to discuss any issues, including through mediation, etc. BC Minor simply hasn't been willing to tell Baseball BC what are their specific concerns, or enter dialogue to resolve them.

We've put out our position at several junctures to try and communicate in an open, transparent manner, including the letter of response to the BC Minor withdrawal.

Our member-based model does give us communications challenges as we have worked largely through member organizations to communicate with Local Associations. We now need to adapt that.

While I won't try to cover all the topics that I understand have been raised in different meetings around BC Minor membership in Baseball BC, I do want to address a few.

-Grass Roots development – an agreed priority.

-a membership survey was conducted a few years ago and the directive was clear from respondents that Grass Roots needs to be a priority for Baseball BC

-BC Minor representatives on our board were active participants in deciding on our approach

-New initiative to add a staff position, knowing it meant less financial program support for all members, mainly BC Minor, and was supported by BC Minor Directors.

-Not a single motion has been put forward by a BC Minor Director and defeated...not just on Grass Roots, but for all issues...for 9 years. We have done everything that BC Minor Directors have asked

-Gaming

-A February 8 letter from BC Minor in advance of the Special Meeting related to comments made about communication with the Gaming Branch saw Baseball BC follow up with the Gaming Branch and received a statement in writing saying about the BC Minor statement, "the statement is not entirely correct"... "there is one PSO per sport and that intermediary organizations are not eligible."

-Baseball Canada

-We are told BC Minor leaders have suggested Baseball Canada supports BC Minor, would like them to have direct access to Baseball Canada. This is completely untrue and we have written and verbal confirmation that Baseball Canada fully supports its member, Baseball BC, and our organization's leadership, in its role as Baseball Canada member and PSO in BC. Also, Baseball Canada programs and services will continue to be delivered by its Provincial members, in our case, Baseball BC

We remain open to dialogue with BC Minor.

We're determined to do everything we can to act responsibly as the PSO.

We are saddened at the prospect of significant disruption to players and programs, for no good reason, and we will work to minimize that.

We remain strongly committed to values of open dialogue, transparency and a co-operative, consensus based approach. We recognize that you can't force co-operation, and of course must recognize that dialogue doesn't work unless all parties want to reach agreement.

Our member organizations other than BC Minor remain committed to this approach.

Indeed we are committed to an LTAD model that builds a more integrated, seamless approach across member organizations. With a number of organizations, cooperation to that end is the only way we can be effective as an athlete-centric system that puts the development needs of athletes over protecting any one system.

We are much stronger at the Grass Roots level if we have a strong High Performance program that young athletes can aspire to. We're stronger at High Performance with a strong, broad Grass Roots foundation.

We believe in cooperation and dialogue over confrontation and ultimatums. That's our strength as a member based organization and we're proud of it.

Bill Woodley from viaSport spoke.

- Bill spoke to the background of the viaSport organization
- What is happening to the organization is not new
- Your challenges are not unique and unfortunately do occur
- viaSport has reviewed the approach to keep the sport together and supports it
- viaSport supports the Baseball BC Board and their goal to keep the sport together
- A connected sport system is what we need. Working together is the only way we will succeed.
- He encouraged all the organizations present to commit to communicating.

A question from the floor asked about any viaSport support ending for BC Minor members once BC Minor leaves the PSO. It is correct that none will go to BC Minor.

Kidsport was also asked about when BC Minor leaves. Kidsport BC is only available to PSO members.

Funding was discussed and it was emphasized that funding will not be re-routed should any member leave the membership.

BC Minor Director Grant Rimer suggested there are always two sides to a coin and Baseball BC had asked viaSport to come and support one side. Bill replied that Baseball BC didn't invite him to attend, he asked to come.

A question asked about what a local association would lose if they left with BC Minor.

Bill encouraged BC Minor to get back to discussion, while he can't force it...no one can force it...it is the path to resolution.

While there are differences in every organization, we need to look at why we are here...to get kids on the field.

John spoke to the fact that Mike Sarai did attend the recent Board Meeting to discuss the transition in hopes that BC Minor members can still access programming...but wouldn't discuss any of the reasons we are here today.

It was suggested that BC Minor changing their name has caused confusion...for clarity Baseball BC will continue to refer to them as BC Minor

A comment from the floor suggested that in agreeing with the comment about two sides...there are in fact 40% of athletes from the BC Minor membership, through local associations that are looking for help and support the Board at Baseball BC and wish to stay

Fire Bell...

A question from the floor about the PBL using younger players than they have in the past...why are we taking them at such a young age? Ted answered suggesting that the real numbers aren't as high as being reported. Recent years have seen only 20 Grade 9 athletes play in the PBL. The Junior Premier league was actually born as an independent league when PBL teams of the day fielded requests from athletes and parents that wanted to play in their organizations at younger ages. Ted also spoke to the misconception that only PBL kids make the Selects teams...this is not true. We simply choose the best players that try out...there are no quotas.

A comment from the floor suggested that the PBL is now taking Grade 7 athletes.

Discussion about possibly working together between the PBL franchises and the BC Minor local associations. This happens now in some communities.

High Performance discussion surrounding allegations of BC Minor players being treated differently.

Recruiting allegations suggested through High Performance.

Grant Rimer made a number of statements critical of PBL approaches and actions. Further discussion surrounding the PBL v BC Minor issue ensued.

A comment from a parent...while everyone is fighting over the kids...it is my kid and I will decide where he plays. I am a little offended that you are talking about my kid and what is right for him.

A comment from a parent whose son plays for the Prep team in North Shore...the current import rule at BC Minor forced him to the North Shore because all of the AAA teams had decided on their imports.

John Berry brought the meeting back to the Road Ahead Paper

John spoke to the role of staff in this process...staff is simply advising and implementing the boards decisions

The Road Ahead was presented...regardless of decisions other organizations make, we will have options for anyone to participate

David Laing presented the outline in the Road Ahead document for access options.

Local Association Level – simply an option for whole organizations who wish to affiliate directly

Funding questions ensued. John spoke to the Gaming regulations

Andrew Grant spoke to the suggestions about Gaming Funds be redistributed and that he takes offense to any claims about misuse of those funds

Steve Ashley spoke to the issue in 2009 when Gaming Funding was impacted and the fact that BC Minor assisted. All monies were repaid including a rebate to BC Minor, although BC Minor didn't fully reimburse their local associations.

Steve further spoke to the fact that the BC Minor Directors didn't bring issues forward or even attend meetings to properly discuss these issues.

Discussion about possible scheduling was brought forward by Mark DeShane.

Is there a deadline for associations or teams to declare? Baseball BC can't set a deadline yet to allow for flexibility, building on input from this meeting.

A question of representation on the Baseball BC board for any breakaway group was asked. It is expected that there must be a voice for any new group but no details have been discussed. John did suggest that the Road Ahead document outlining Associate Membership would be a transitional measure and would need changing in subsequent years to address governance and possible concern that the PSO is not seen as competing with its members.

What rules would be used in this competition. David suggested the starting point would be the Baseball Canada rule book. We could also look at elements of the BC Minor rulebook, should that make sense.

Team Membership Affiliation – an option for teams that only want to access the Elimination / Provincial Championship events.

Similar to the Ontario model.

Question about an individual member accessing. We will find a way if it is not otherwise covered in this document.

Question about timing and payment. June 1st will be the entry deadline. If a non-member wins the event and qualifies the team would have a very short window to pay in full or we would move onto the next highest finisher.

What is the BC Minor ruling towards this? That is a question that should be asked of them.

Discussion about BC Minor rules.

A comment about female baseball was offered.

David spoke to the fact that we are here today to find solutions. This starting point is offered to the group and we will make decisions based on feedback. This is about making sure anyone who wishes to participate has an avenue to do so.

John Braaten spoke about Girls Baseball and the plan to continue on as we have at the BC Minor end.

Individual Registration Affiliation (Program Access)

Presented as written

Questions

Are there any applications in hand for hosts for provincial championships. Not at this point.

Would any BC Minor team winning a championship be responsible for travel costs? Yes.

Rules question about the 13U event. Very different rules and age groups from Canadian teams and Little League teams. We are open to any team with the understanding they must meet the age requirements and play the Baseball Canada rules.

Are All Star teams eligible? Possibly, but we would need to identify common rules that address eligibility and boundaries. We are not interested in super teams or travel teams (academy).

When will we know about the Elimination tournament dates? As far in advance of the tournament dates as is possible. We are bound by deadlines with both WCBAS and Baseball Canada as to the latest dates possible.

Would you be willing to protect team's anonymity should they wish to sign up for these events in light of BC Minors current rules? We will have a transparent process, but, protection of privacy can be consistent with an open process.

BC Minor has made public their tournament schedule and provincials.

NCCP Certification question. We are expecting to require the same NCCP requirements at the Elimination tournaments to ensure all winning teams have eligible coaches. This is a starting point.

What would the travel cost be for a non-affiliated elimination winners? It would be the full cost (upwards of \$20,000). A winning team is not obligated to travel, we would simply move to the next highest finisher in this case.

Can a non-affiliated member host the 13U Baseball Canada Championship without playing in it? That is something we should look at; it hasn't been a consideration until now.

Is there anything that Baseball BC is doing to provide a low cost High Performance program? The Baseball BC High Performance program is very affordable. BC Minor has made some strides to create a lower cost alternative to the PBL. But Baseball BC doesn't control programming at that level.

South Burnaby suggested they would set up a meeting between both parties (BC Minor and Baseball BC) and invite them all to see who shows up. Baseball BC is willing meet.

Next steps

A summary will be drafted and distributed.

Would Baseball BC willing to facilitate discussion for all involved to map out a better plan. Yes.