USA Badminton (USAB) Board Meeting – Minutes
January 29, 2026 | Via Zoom

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at **5:05 PM Pacific Time**.

Attendance
Ken Wong (chair), Pavan Vedere (secretary), Ben Apple, Patty Pflaging, Philip Varghese, Beiwen Zhang OLY, Jamie Subandhi OLY (joined at 5:09 PM), Paula Lynn O. Cao Hok, OLY, (joined at 5:19 PM)

Absent - Excused: Sudhir Kondisetty

Meeting Notice Waiver
The Board unanimously agreed to waive the 30-day meeting notice requirement.

Conflicts of Interest
No conflicts of interest were declared.

Operational and Governance Concerns

Concern: 2026 Budget Approval Status

Ms. Pflaging asked whether the FY/CY 2026 budget had been approved.

Mr. Varghese,financial audit committee chair, reported that the FY26 budget presented to the financial audit committee contained gaps and required corrections, which he has already requested from John Ruger, interim CEO. The annual budget is supposed to be approved by December of the previous year (meaning Dec 2025). USAB CEO/management has the responsibility to submit an approvable FY26 budget to the financial audit committee by November 2025 so that the Board can approve before the new fiscal year begins.

Chair Wong requested that Mr. Varghese follow up with Mr. Ruger to expedite completion.

Concern: 2024 Audit Status

Mr. Varghese informed the Board that the **2024 audit remains incomplete** and requires additional work by USAB management.

Mr. Vedere requested that Chair Wong send a formal communication to Mr. Ruger highlighting the urgency of completing both the audit and budget work, and to escalate as necessary.

Concern: Recent Employee Termination

Chair Ken Wong reported that he had contacted Interim CEO John Ruger via email to confirm whether appropriate HR protocols were followed during a recent termination of a USAB staff member. Further clarification is needed from Mr. Ruger regarding what actions remain outstanding.

Ms. Pflaging provided historical context regarding a prior wrongful termination case involving USAB and emphasized the importance of procedural diligence.

Concern: Status of Ethics Complaints / Grievances

Mr. Vedere requested a board update on the status of ethics complaints and grievances that have been submitted to the Ethics Committee. Chair Wong confirmed he would follow up with Ethics Committee Chair, Sudhir Kondisetty, who was absent from today's board meeting.

Clarification: Iris Wang's Board Member Status / Board Seat Vacancy

Iris Wang resigned from the USAB Board effective December 31, 2025, which was the last day of her four-year term as an Athlete Director (one of four athlete directors on the USAB Board, as defined in the USAB bylaws). The next step is for USAB management to facilitate the election of her successor, in accordance with the bylaws.

Reset Plan Discussion

Mr. Apple
Mr. Apple characterized the current situation as requiring a choice between difficult options and emphasized that the organization is operating under significant time pressure. He noted that while BWF and USOPC may not fully understand the U.S. grassroots badminton landscape, USAB has a strong case for grassroots growth and can influence those organizations through cooperation rather than requiring specific grassroots commitments within the reset document itself.

Regarding NGB status, Mr. Apple stated that USOPC may not be in a position to guarantee future recognition without completing due diligence. He indicated that this approach reflects prudence rather than lack of support, noting that USOPC staff would not likely invest time in the reset process if future recognition were not a realistic possibility.

On Board composition, Mr. Apple expressed concern that BWF may not fully appreciate the value of USAB's director structure and recommended that the Board consider accepting the reset proposal as currently written and communicate acceptance to BWF without requesting additional modifications.

Mr. Wong
Chair Wong reiterated that the Board broadly supports pursuing the reset pathway. However, he emphasized the importance of taking sufficient time to ensure that appropriate safeguards are incorporated to position the organization for long-term success.

Ms. Pflaging
Ms. Pflaging expressed agreement with Chair Wong's position and reinforced the need for appropriate commitments and protections within the reset framework.

Mr. Varghese
Mr. Varghese read out his prepared comments. Please refer to them at the end of these minutes.

Ms. Subandhi
Ms. Subandhi emphasized the importance of supporting both grassroots and elite development pathways. She noted that obtaining some level of assurance from USOPC regarding eventual restoration of NGB status would be important for organizational confidence and planning.

Mr. Vedere
Mr. Vedere volunteered to propose meeting times (Wednesday and Friday at 6:00 PM Pacific) to BWF for a meeting with the full BWF Board to discuss the reset proposal and request consideration of the Board's proposed modifications.

Ms. Cao Hok
Ms. Cao Hok expressed support for Ms. Subandhi's comments, reinforcing the importance of balancing grassroots and elite priorities and securing a clear future pathway.

Ms. Zhang
Ms. Zhang noted that she could understand multiple perspectives on the issue. She expressed support for most of the points raised and shared hope that the reset process would create a positive future direction for the organization.

Action Items

- Chair Wong to review with Ethics Chair (Sudhir Kondisetty) the status of current ethics complaint(s)..
- Mr. Varghese to follow up with Mr. Ruger regarding budget completion.
- Chair Wong to send formal communication to Mr. Ruger regarding urgency of budget and audit completion.
- Mr. Vedere to draft additional reset discussion points and coordinate communication with BWF. (Email sent to BWF is available in Appendix 2)

Procedural Discussion

Mr. Apple raised a procedural question regarding a prior Board email thread in which he had requested action via email vote to accept the reset proposal without additional modifications He asked whether the Chair would recognize such an email vote as valid Board action without a formal meeting and without discussion.

Chair Wong reaffirmed his position that, given the significance of the matter to the organization and its membership, the Board should continue discussions through formal processes. He confirmed that engagement with BWF would proceed as part of a deliberate and measured approach intended to support the long-term success of the organization.

Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at **6:12 PM Pacific Time**.

Appendix 1: Philip Varghese's comments:

Thank you, Chair.

I agree with Sudhir's proposal to allow each Board member five minutes to speak on or discuss this motion without interruption. I have summarized my response to meet this time limit and to stay on topic. Forgive me for reading my written response; I do not want to omit key points by speaking extemporaneously.

I want to explain why I will vote NO on the Governance Reset motion, and why I believe this proposal is the wrong answer to the right questions.

First, I want to acknowledge that the current Reset proposal is an improvement over the initial version. The Mission Statement remains unchanged; the current Board can still interview candidates; there will be at least two directors from the badminton community; 10-year athletes are not required to resign; current Board members may reapply; and our core intellectual property will not automatically be transferred if the Reset fails. Those changes matter, and they show that some of the Board's earlier concerns were heard.

However, in my view, those improvements do not alter the proposal's fundamental nature. This Reset is still a BWF/USOPC-designed governance swap that assumes that changing who sits on the Board, under the oversight of a Normalization Committee, will somehow fix problems that are much deeper than board composition. The analysis states that a "successful reset is determined at USOPC discretion," and that USOPC will move to another NGB if we do not comply. That is not a real partnership; that is an ultimatum.

My area of expertise is finance, accounting, and audit, and what I have seen on the Finance/Audit Committee over multiple years is not a problem that can be solved by musical chairs at the top. Our compliance audits have repeatedly cited USAB for the same issues: budgets not approved on time, delayed audits, late filing of Form 990, failure to provide interim financials to the Committee and Board in a timely manner, and failure to follow our financial policies and spending limits. Those are problems of execution, discipline, and support, not simply who holds the title of Chair or CEO. If USOPC is truly concerned about governance and athlete protection, it should help us build the capacity and systems to address these issues, not just insist that a different group of people sit in these seats.

The Reset also does nothing to address the bigger, uncomfortable reality: badminton is in a fight for its survival as a sport in this country. We have roughly 3,000 members across a large geographic area, representing juniors, professionals, para-athletes, club players, and parents with diverse needs. The infrastructure demands for badminton are high—special courts, ceiling height, and so on—while other racket sports, like pickleball, are exploding precisely because they are easy to access and play almost anywhere. BWF and USOPC know that no governance reset will build courts, create NCAA programs, or reverse decades of underinvestment in grassroots infrastructure. Yet that is exactly where the sport's future will be decided.

I do not dismiss the consequences that would follow if we said NO. We have been told that rejecting the Reset—or failing to act—will restart the USOPC search for another NGB within weeks, that BWF funding of roughly one hundred thousand dollars a year will stop, that we will lose BWF recognition, sanctioned National Championships, the U.S. Open, and access to rankings and selection events. Membership and sponsors will likely follow those assets out the door. I understand that risk, and I am not taking it lightly.

But our responsibility as a Board is not simply to accept any ultimatum we are given, even if the consequences are severe. Our responsibility is to ask whether this Reset addresses the root causes of our current situation, and my answer is no. It does not fix the structural weaknesses of a small, nationwide nonprofit with complex constituencies. It does not fix our chronic financial and governance noncompliance. It does not address the lack of facilities, the collapse of the college pathway, or the competitive pressure from other sports. It is, at bottom, the same old solution: replace the Board, declare a reset, and hope for a different outcome.

In my view, that is a fool’s errand. It is lipstick on a pig.

If BWF and USOPC are serious about the long-term health of badminton in the United States, they must be prepared to do more than dictate a governance reset and threaten decertification. They should be investing real resources and creativity in building sustainable infrastructure, strengthening compliance capacity, and designing models that work for a 3,000-plus-member organization with diverse stakeholders. That is the hard work we have not yet seen.[2][1]

For these reasons, I will vote NO on the Governance Reset motion.

Thank you.

Appendix 2: Email sent to BWF

Hi Thomas,

Can you please let me know if **Wed 2/4, 6 PM Pacific** or **Fri 2/6, 6 PM Pacific** work for you? The Wed option is a preferred option for us.

If these two options don't work for you, can you kindly send a couple of time options which work for you and aren't too late or early for board members here who are in the East Coast and West Coast of the USA.

The USAB Board is generally supportive of the reset proposal. We would appreciate it if BWF could work with USOPC to incorporate the points below into the plan, and suggest discussing these during the upcoming call to avoid extensive back-and-forth emails. We sincerely value the time and effort you and your team are dedicating to this initiative for the growth of badminton in the USA. By collaborating and listening to each other, we hope the three parties can agree on the framework of the reset proposal.

Given the importance of this decision, we want to ensure sufficient time and thoughtful consideration is devoted to achieving the best possible outcome.

1. The Mission Statement remains unchanged

2. Consistent with the Bylaws, the current BOD will be able to interview prospecƟve candidates, but leaving the selecƟon to the NormalizaƟon CommiƩee

3. The new Board composiƟon will include two (2) Directors drawn from the badminton community

4. In the unlikely event of an unsuccessful reset, USAB will not be required to transfer intellectual property, including athlete lists, general member records or other general IP rights.

5. Current duly elected (by their peers), 10 Year athletes will not be required to resign.

6. Current BOD members may reapply for BOD Director seats during the reset, knowing the NormalizaƟon CommiƩee has final say who is interviewed and chosen.

7. Upon approval of the reset proposal and the constitution of a new Board, there shall be an explicit commitment to:

* Continue grassroots and junior development initiatives, including conducting at least the same number of junior tournaments as held in the preceding year, thereby preserving and building upon the progress made over the past decade

* Restore NGB status to the organization immediately, without the need for any additional application, review process, or waiting period.

8. BWF will send a final terms sheet incorporaƟng these points.

Thanks

- Pavan
