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**Keith Atkins**

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May 2020

I hope the month of May finds you all well. I'm happy the winter temperatures are gone here in the South and the April showers have washed away the pollen that causes so many of us allergy symptoms. Looking out my windows now, it is a beautiful sunny day, temperature in the 70s, and all the trees full of beautiful green leaves. I hope everyone can enjoy some time outdoors, safely, as we all need to continue social distancing until this crisis is over.

The Board wants to reiterate that the health, safety, and well being of our members is ultimately the most important thing to consider these days. While there is a great risk in having monthly meetings, we urge clubs to NOT have physical meetings while your areas still have active cases and increased risks of infection. For 2020, meeting requirements will NOT be enforced. With the success we are seeing with meetings conducted through web applications like Zoom, Webex, and others; we know that clubs have some resources for having meetings and educational programs during this time. If you have someone in your club with the technical savvy to help make that happen, your club can keep members engaged during the pandemic. Just know that while this is a great option, clubs are under no obligation to meet right now.

Two regions have officially conducted region business as of the time of this letter. The West Region has elected Heather Woods from the Farmington Club as the 2021 Region Director. The Southeast Region has elected Margie Steed from the Red River Club as the 2021 Region Director. Congratulations to Heather and Margie! Thank you for stepping up to share your knowledge and help lead your regions next year! We all hope and pray that life will be back to normal in 2021 and we will be able to resume our physical region meetings.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the plunging oil prices have hit our membership hard. Businesses have cut spending, laid off employees, and even shuttered their operations. As of the end of April, we have less than 900 members with all active clubs having sent membership renewals. That equates to another 16% decrease in membership. With the uncertainty of the industry and our impacted members getting back to work, the Board has reviewed the financial obligations of our contract with the Sheraton Pittsburgh with the Finance Review Committee. We feel the likelihood of having the necessary attendance at Convention in September to meet the financial obligations of the contract are questionable. The chance of losing tens of thousands of dollars this year are more than we can afford to risk. The Force Majeure Clause in our contract could possibly free us from the contract if we cancel completely, but we would likely incur legal costs

Continued...



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getting out of it. The Sheraton will allow us to move our contract to 2022, without any financial cost incurred. We will have to renegotiate room costs and projected number of room nights used based on changes made to the convention format that take place in 2021. With that change, the meeting of the Board of Directors at Convention takes place on Thursday, instead of Tuesday. This brings the Board in on Wednesday instead of Monday, reducing the number of nights necessary for each board members by two, lowering the ADDC cost of the Board at Convention. It also reduces the number of room nights used for the Convention, which affects the contracted Convention room rate, therefore, we will have to renegotiate the total number of rooms needed and the anticipated food and beverage costs, which could change the final room rates. That information will be shared at a future time.

The move of the 2022 Convention to Pittsburgh will mean moving last year's approved 2022 Convention site of Albuquerque, NM to 2023. Any plans currently in the works for 2023 will need to be pushed to 2024. This was not an easy decision, but necessary to ensure the Association does not suffer the devastating blow of the possible financial loss of an unsuccessful Convention this year.

Not having our annual Convention and Educational Conference is unprecedented, as is almost everything we see happening around us in 2020. Over the next several months, we will be working on the details for handling necessary business of the Association for 2020, such as any urgent Bylaw changes, election of officers, etc. by mail-in or electronic means. We believe the normal Convention Board Meeting this year can be handled by electronic means, so there will be no more physical board meetings in 2020. Please bear with us as we navigate through these uncertain times.

Until next month, please continue to take care of yourself. Don't put yourself in any unnecessary risk.

*"Well done is better than well said." Benjamin Franklin*

*Keith*