

# ADVISOR

**+ PAGE 3****Wanted: Sergeant at Arms**

Is someone in your association responsible for keeping order at meetings?

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Find out how officials associations from across the country are making headlines.

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MICP Q&A covers what an assigner can and can't do related to assignments.



## Learn to Listen

By Carl Smith

As an association leader, how much listening do you do? It's a known fact that when your mouth is moving, your ears don't work. That comment is tongue in cheek, but it does appear to be so in many cases. Are you listening to the membership to address their concerns or are you following an agenda that's important only to you? Let's cover some methods of gathering information from members to make sure you're doing what's best for all, not just a select few.

### 1. MEMBERSHIP POLLS OR SURVEYS

Depending on the size of your membership, polls/surveys can be one of the most efficient methods of gathering information. Many times, by surveying members, topics can come to the attention of your board that no one has considered. Anonymous surveys usually work best because members don't want potential repercussions based on their opinions. Be prepared for some blasting remarks. Our association has about 100 members and I can guarantee you that everyone is not always happy. Sort through for valid comments and address those, and let the venting go by the wayside.

### 2. SMALL GROUP MEETINGS OR PHONE CALL LISTS

Divide up the membership list and call or meet with the members to air out concerns they have about the association. Those concerns may range from governance (bylaws) to business practices (policies and procedures), all the way down to where the banquet is held or how door prizes are given away. Be prepared for anything, and again, wade through the feedback and retain

what's valid and bring it to the board for discussion. There will always be some members who'd gripe if they were hung with a new rope, as my dad used to say, with the idea being that some members are going to gripe no matter what. Those concerns still need to be addressed, but often are personal problems with that particular official and don't affect the entire membership.

### 3. CONCERNS ONE BY ONE BROUGHT TO THE BOARD

If you have a general member who has a complaint, that member needs to feel confident that you're taking him or her seriously and will address any concern at the next board meeting. It's much like dealing with coaches. They often just want to know they're being heard. Give them their due and follow up by giving them the answer the board decided on, whether they like the answer or not. Encourage them to become

involved in the political process and run for office. You'll usually find out that many like to gripe, but not many are willing to commit that kind of time to serving all members.

### 4. SHOW OF HANDS AT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Associations will occasionally have basic informational topics that require quick feedback. In that case, you can ask for a show of hands at your next general membership meeting. Examples may include anything from feedback on what's being served at the meetings to optional dates or places for the season-ending banquet. Those shouldn't take much time, and will give you an idea to work with.

I think the most important thing is to be viewed as approachable, whatever the subject. If you've been elected to your board position, it's because

+ See "Learn to Listen" P.8

## Mind Your Perception

By Tim Sloan

You may have heard there's a lot of scrutiny of the officiating avocation these days. Beginning with the morning drivel from Yahoo, progressing through the local newspaper and cable sports to network know-it-alls, everyone's willing to take a pot shot at the officials. Let's leave the psychology of that to another theater but acknowledge the sociology of this behavior: Justified or not, people tend to believe what they're told by "experts" and are forming an opinion that you can't get an officiating license

these days without at least a misdemeanor for petty theft on your record.

To be balanced about that, there are also no honest politicians, reputable real estate agents or steady-handed surgeons anymore. Whatever our profession, we are exposed to suspicion, disdain and undue scrutiny because recent generations have been fed — and digested — the notion that conspiracies and confederacies lurk around every corner. Officiating leaders have several choices of how to respond, but my contention is to offer the doubting hordes a steady diet of confusion. Even if we've never worked any higher than Pop

Warner football or never made it above member-at-large in the local association of tiddleywinks officials, we must present ourselves as proactive, neutral and reliable citizens to anyone who recognizes us as either officials or their representatives. We must make sure that every interaction we have with non-officials leaves them wondering how this guy or gal missed the subterfuge training. Of course, the vast silent majority neither knows nor cares if we're officials or not, but some of the ideas which follow will help us reinforce a positive image the rest might not expect from us. Try working these things into your personal presentation:

## WATCH HOW YOU DRESS.

I'm not going to suggest tails and gowns after five o'clock here, but it amazes me how many officials will walk into a venue wearing clothing with their favorite team's logo on it. I assume they wear their alma mater's kit out of some kind of pride, so I assume at least someone at the game will have similar pride in some other school. Why provoke people? As I gaze into my wardrobe each game day morning, I review the predominant colors worn by

the combatants and choose a frock of a different color.

## BE A COMMENTATOR, NOT A COLUMNIST.

Most people get that if you're officiating, you probably enjoy the sport you're working, if not others, too. That being true, there's nothing wrong with behaving as an admirer of the people playing, coaching or administering a sport. "I like the way number 13 shoots the ball," or "Coach seems to be working hard on the fundamentals," are all good comments because they avoid comparisons, but indicate your interest and knowledge. Contrast those statements to, "I bet the other team wishes they had number 13," or, "The new coach is finally teaching some fundamentals," and you'll see how the simple-minded will discern bias. The people we're concerned about will find intrigue in silence just as much as they will in a mascot logo on the hood of your car. Be "in" the world of sports, but not "of" it.

## EXTEND EVERYONE THE SAME COURTESY.

If you've made it known that the buck stops with you and any civilized overture from the public or an administrator will be honored swiftly, you had better amaze everyone by doing just that. It is well known that an alien race from the Gamma Quadrant has sent minions to Earth to make our lives miserable, but we must remain above the fray: Patiently and promptly deal with their concerns if presented properly, no matter how incredibly. Politely hang up when it stops being about information and starts being about people, personalities or someone's urgent need for corrective lenses. Once people understand your door is always open but has a line not to be crossed somewhere inside, they're likely to give you and your organization more respect.

## NEVER BE THE PACING ITEM.

Make no mistake, officials offer a service to the game, not the other way around. We need the administrators more than they need us. From that perspective, we must offer our services in pace with the people engaging us. If they need paperwork, don't make them wait for it. If they need information, make sure it is clear. If they want money, pay it before it's due. The more you can do as an association leader or just another official to avoid being the long pole in the tent,

the easier it will be to gain the benefit of the doubt among possible detractors.

## ERR IN FAVOR OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP.

The cancer of distrust I alluded to at the outset might indeed exist within your own organization, too. Are you sure there isn't someone who thinks the president gets first crack at the good games? Doesn't the executive eat any potential cash surplus at meals before meetings? Why give people the opportunity, right? Think about divesting yourself of assigning games. Consider having your membership vote on — or at least review — any expenses the association occurs, on an ongoing basis. Show them that you never have anything to hide.

If the *Advisor* editor had jumped into her time machine, visited me 10 years ago and told me that I'd be writing this article today, I would have sworn off calamari and the associated hallucinations right at that instant. I could not have predicted the extent of the attitude officials experience today. That being the case, I probably enjoy officiating, the camaraderie and the challenge even more than I did 10 years ago. The lunatic fringe will never go away, but neither will we. What's changed is that the whole presentation of sports has become more intricate, sophisticated and even entangled. Officials, simply need to be more careful and sensible about playing our part in this extravaganza.

Know the issues; know the expectations; know the ramifications of your activities and actions.

And the best way to do that is to know ourselves.

*Tim Sloan, Davenport, Iowa, is a high school football, basketball and volleyball official, and a former college football and soccer official.* 📧

## BYLAW BIT

Be sure to address all foreseeable scenarios. Carefully walk through all of the "what-if" scenarios to avoid holes in the bylaws.

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# Wanted: Sergeant at Arms

By Brent Killackey

In addition to the traditional president, secretary and treasurer positions, many groups and associations may also have a board position called sergeant at arms.

The position, which is primarily responsible for keeping order at meetings, has a long history in legislative bodies. Both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have sergeant at arms positions.

Fun fact: The sergeant at arms of the U.S. House of Representatives has an official mace which can be used to keep order. It's actually more ceremonial. The current mace has been in use since 1842 and features an eagle with spread wings atop a globe; the eagle is cast in solid silver.

While adopting an official mace for your officiating association is probably a tad over the top, having someone available to help maintain order isn't such a bad idea.

The sergeant at arms is the person who would be tasked with stepping in — at the direction of the board's president — if a member become disruptive or violates Robert's Rules of Order. In most officiating associations, diplomacy usually works best. That's not to say that on certain issues passions won't run high and someone may be needed to help cooler heads prevail — but the proverbial mace shouldn't be the first choice for settling things down.

But ultimately if someone is being asked to leave, the sergeant at arms is the one who would help ensure that happens. By the nature of that part of the role, the position often draws current or former

law enforcement officials, but anyone can fulfill the role.

Additionally, an association can use a sergeant at arms for more than cracking down on members who cause meeting disruptions.

Associations can task sergeant at arms with setting up the meeting site, making sure tables and chairs are set up as desired, that any AV equipment is ready to use and that any needed refreshments are available.

The sergeant at arms can administer any sign-in documentation, which can be particularly important for associations that require attendance at a certain number of meetings. That person might also be the one to greet new members and ensure they're made welcome and comfortable.

When the meeting is over, the sergeant at arms can be in charge of ensuring equipment is packed up and everything at the meeting site is returned to order.

The board can also assign other tasks, such as collecting ballots, tallying votes and keeping other records.

Depending on how the position is defined within an association's bylaws, the sergeant at arms position may be a person appointed by the board or elected by the members; it may have full board voting powers like any other board member, just like a traditional secretary or treasurer position.

Not every officiating association needs a sergeant at arms, but if there's a need to have someone ready to step in to keep order — and potentially tackle some additional duties — it might be worth considering.

*Brent Killackey is Referee's managing editor and a high school baseball umpire. 📧*

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# Bring in an Outside Speaker

By Todd Korth

Association leaders are always looking for ways to enhance their members' learning for scheduled meetings. One of those ways is by inviting an outside speaker to a meeting. Though many leaders are confident in their presentations to the members, outsiders with expertise in

a particular area will often be better at communicating the subtleties of a topic from a position of authority.

A guest speaker should convey current, realistic information and a perspective on a subject that is not available to association members through any other means. Using a guest speaker involves more than just arranging for someone to show up at the

## THE PULSE

Local Association News Nationwide

### Two Receive Center Circle Awards

Indiana Officials Association (IOA) basketball officials Judy Phillips, of Indianapolis, and Rex Nichols, of Mooresville, received Center Circle Officials Awards from the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame at banquets in March.

During his career, Nichols worked 30 boys' sectionals, 24 regionals, nine semi-states and five state finals. He was the 2015 recipient of the Roy Gardner Award, given by the Indiana Basketball Coaches Association, and has been recognized by the Indiana High School Athletic Association and NFHS with the Outstanding Basketball Official Award.

Nichols has worked as a rules interpreter, served as a mentor and spent four years as a clinician.

Phillips officiated 15 girls' sectionals, 10 regionals, four semi-states and three state finals. She received the Indiana Basketball Coaches Association's Mildred Ball Award as an outstanding girls' basketball official in 2010.

She has been a rules interpreter and clinician. She has experience working NCAA D-II and D-III games, as well as in the D-I Mid-Continent Conference.

### Officials Association Presents Sportsmanship Award

The South Central Basketball Officials Association presented Arcola High School in April with a sportsmanship award. The award, voted on by association members, recognizes professionalism, sportsmanship and hospitality toward officials.

"It is a very nice honor for the school and everybody that is involved in our game days from the coaches, players, fans, scoring table, ticket takers and everybody else that is part of the game experience," Zach Zehr, Arcola athletics director said. "Officials are the most overlooked and unfairly criticized part of high school sports and we are honored that they feel welcomed, respected and taken care of at our school."

### Hudson County Umpires Association Member Featured in 'Ask the Ump'

Mike Lynch, member and past president of the Hudson County (N.J.) Umpires Association answers baseball and softball questions from readers as part of the Ask the Ump column in the *Hudson Reporter*. The feature will appear regularly during the baseball and softball season through October. It is designed to explain the rules for girls, boys and adults. Lynch, a high school umpire, is a member of the National Association of Sports Officials, a mechanics interpreter and former ASA member.

SOURCES: JOURNAL GAZETTE & TIMES-COURIER, HUDSON (N.J.) REPORTER

appointed time. Here are some general guidelines when using outside speakers, whether the speaker is a respectable official from a different area or another sport, a local coach or athletic director, or a local media representative.

### WHY USE A SPEAKER?

Use the speaker to enhance the topics you are covering. The time to use an outsider effectively in your class is when you have a topic planned prior to the start of the association meetings for that year and the expert on that subject resides in the area. Maybe it is difficult to cover the material in the same way that they could. Even in your area of expertise, another perspective can add invaluable information. The point is to make sure that the speaker's topic fits into your meeting plan.

### CREDIBILITY

Do not just settle for anybody. The association members will be most receptive to a guest speaker who communicates relevant and reliable information. It is easy to ensure credibility if the person you are inviting to your meeting is a colleague or a someone you know or have heard speak. It is more difficult if you are doing "cold calls" to seek an expert.

Keep in mind that establishing credibility means both knowing the topic well and knowing how to communicate it to sports officials.

Be on the lookout for good speakers who have specialized knowledge that would be interesting to other officials. Your daughter's soccer coach may work for a survey research firm and would be a dynamic speaker on the use of statistics and officiating. Perhaps a noted judge in the community is also a sports official.

### INVITING SPEAKERS

Arranging outside speakers can be a difficult, time-consuming process. Securing commitments from speakers requires an early start on planning the association meetings and determining the schedule. You need to make contact via email or phone well in advance to get on a busy person's calendar. Early planning also emphasizes to your speaker the importance of the speaking engagement. On the other hand, make sure to build some flexibility into your schedule to accommodate the speaker.

### UPDATE THE SPEAKER

Once you have the speaker scheduled at the appropriate point, it is important to ensure that he or she fits into the flow of the meetings.

- » First, send the speaker some information that will serve as the topic for that evening. As an alternative, you can ask the speaker for any information that he or she would like to disperse to the association members in advance.
- » Second, send the speaker an outline of the key points you would like covered, or discuss that in detail and have the speaker send you an outline of the presentation, so there are no surprises.
- » Third, do a brief but meaningful introduction of the speaker and the topic at the end of the class that precedes that speaker's appearance. That prepares the members for what to expect and enables them to begin thinking about questions to ask the guest.


In addition to providing a guest speaker with information about the meeting topic, it is wise to discuss the meeting's style. Talk about how you approach each meeting and what is available, like a screen for a PowerPoint, projector, DVD player and laptop computer, and what the speaker finds most comfortable.

### MAKE IT PERSONAL

Encourage speakers to talk from personal experience. It is an understatement to say that the best presentations or speeches are from the heart, whether they are communicating about their passion for officiating or their commitment to coaching or school administration.

If you are engaging outside speakers on a controversial topic, make sure they know that they are welcome to share their ideas and opinions. That gives members a point of view to consider as they form their own opinions.

Guest speakers can provide an important perspective for sports officials. Keep in mind that you are giving that person an opportunity to contribute to the education of officials in the community. It is good public relations both for the speaker and for the officials.

*Todd Korth is a Referee associate editor and multi-sport official.* 

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## HOW TO...

### DETERMINE WHICH MEMBERS SHOULD BE MENTORS

At the risk of injecting hyperbole, the mentor/mentee relationship is as important to a burgeoning official as a parent is to a child. In both cases, the manner in which the newcomer official or the adolescent behaves down the road are shaped by those who teach him or her. We can't choose our parents, but we can choose mentors. Here are tips on how to figure out who might be good mentors.

#### Ask the willing.

You can't force someone to mentor. If you do, all you'll get is a half-hearted effort and a mentee who is disillusioned and more confused than before. Usually active officials makes good mentors because they're up to speed on the rules, mechanics and philosophies. But some retirees still have their finger on the pulse of the game as well.

#### Match personalities.

If you pair a mentor who has a hardline approach with a mentee who is a bit timid, the newer official is likely to be intimidated. That drill sergeant type can still be a mentor, but match him or her with someone who won't be daunted by a more aggressive manner. People who are accustomed to passing on knowledge to others – e.g. teachers, instructors, professors – may or may not be ideal mentors. Again, it's all about the approach.

#### It's a marathon, not a sprint.

One cannot cover every aspect in a short period of time. So choose a mentor who is willing to be in it for the long haul. By the same token, understand there are limits. It is possible for some staleness to set in. Follow up with the mentee to ensure the mentor doesn't start sounding like the proverbial broken record.

#### Choose know-a-lots, not know-it-alls.

A good mentor is still inquisitive and willing to learn. Choose members who aren't shy about asking other members' advice if they get stuck. Those who bluff their way through when a mentee asks about a knotty problem are hurting themselves as well as the mentee.

#### Be sure they're qualified.

Just because an official has worked at a higher level or has had more "big games," it doesn't mean they've cornered the market on wisdom. A mentor has to check his or her ego at the door. A mentor should espouse proper mechanics and not perpetuate old myths.

## MICP Q&A

# Assigner Revokes Games for Dual Membership

By Donald C. Collins

**Q.** An assigner from one of the associations I belong to feels an official shouldn't belong to two associations like I do. I didn't want to give up my membership in another group and the assigner's association has no written restrictions on dual membership, so I stayed a member of both groups. As a result, the assigner revoked my games for his association. As an independent contractor, don't I have the right to belong to multiple associations? What can I do to stop the assigner from discrimination?

**A.** An association can legally bar an official from being a member of multiple associations as long as the association's bylaws ban dual membership and there are no state association rules preventing the ban.

Contracts and regulations govern here. It is not an independent contractor issue — although it could have an impact as to whether an official is an employee or an independent contractor under certain circumstances.

An association's bylaws are a contract between the association and the member. But, a contract alone is not sufficient. A contract and a set of bylaws need to be circulated in order for the association and members to have a true agreement.

Many associations don't circulate their bylaws. Where bylaws ban dual membership, but are not circulated, the official may not be governed by the bylaw restrictions on dual membership. One cannot be governed by that which one never sees.

Associations would be wise to distribute their bylaws, and to record that they distributed them. But, in all fairness, members have obligations, too. A member should not actively avoid getting and reading the bylaws especially in this day and age where bylaws and other association documents are frequently posted online.

Association procedures may prevent an assigner from taking a member's games away even when the member violates the bylaws. Bylaws should

state the circumstances under which a member's assignments can be removed, and bylaws should state the procedures for the removal.

Removal procedures are vital. After all, an assignment that is accepted is just as much a contract as the bylaws. Removal from an assignment really is a situation where two contracts come into conflict. Bylaws that don't have a game removal procedure can't resolve that conflict. Worse, bylaws have to provide some remedy for every violation. In the absence of a bylaw provision, it simply isn't clear that the proper remedy for being in multiple associations is the removal of preexisting assignments.

There are some practical concerns for having removal procedures. Without them, there's no clarity. Without clarity, members are more inclined to perceive favoritism and discrimination. Those perceptions increase the likelihood of lawsuits. Those removal procedures should be supplemented with an appeals process — a basic part of due process.

Removal procedures and due process place some constraints on an association. It is very possible that some of those constraints would prevent an assigner from being the person who enforces a rule that a member can't belong to two associations.

Of course, somewhere there's an association that doesn't have bylaws. It may be a small shop where the assigner is the association. That does not bode well for officials who have their assignments pulled as most employees and contractors who are working without an employment agreement or a labor contract can be terminated at will. Such informal arrangements could come into play in rec leagues and other situations where the assigner has to compete with other independent assigners for business.

It does seem odd to discuss contracts on a matter that strikes an official as an independent contractor issue. It is important to note that officiating combines elements of employee and independent contractor status. Courts have tended to find officials to be independent contractors, but many

agencies don't. Further, even states that have independent contractor laws are not asserting the right of the official to not be terminated under a contract or a set of bylaws. Those states simply exempt employers of officials from workers' compensation payments and unemployment payments. Officials in those states could still be subject to contract provisions that they don't like.

Independent contractor regulations are a prominent part of the laws governing officiating, but we must always remember that they do not replace contracts.

*Donald C. Collins is the executive director of the San Francisco Section of the California Interscholastic Federation. He is a longtime basketball official and lawyer. This article is for informational purposes and is not legal advice.* 📧

## ASSOCIATION SPOTLIGHT

# Training With CBUA- Los Angeles Unit

By Anthony Garcia

Officiating from my beginnings in high school in 1978 is light years from what it is today. To be truly successful today one has to be very knowledgeable in the rules and the mechanics of the game. Approachability, game management, game presence and awareness are some of the qualities officials must develop. Many of those qualities take time and work to develop. Truly great officials are always working on something in their game. The players today are faster, better coached, better equipped and they play year round, so officials need to work just as hard.

The California Baseball Umpires Association-Los Angeles Unit is continuously tweaking its training programs to assist umpires to enhance their rules and mechanics knowledge. The preparation for the next season begins the

day after the last championship game. All the information gathered throughout the season is evaluated to determine what worked and what didn't. What test questions were constantly missed? How many ejections of coaches did we have and what were the circumstances? In 2015, we had only one. Every game card turned in is looked at for common themes such as to uniforms, partner arrivals, checking in with coaches, the starting and ending times of the games, condition of the fields and comments from the umpires on any unusual game situations. Once all the information is gathered we begin our training program for the next year.

Every umpire is required to attend seven regular meetings, an orientation meeting and a field clinic. In addition, in all meetings the wearing of the base uniform is mandatory along with a name tag. That is done for two reasons: to make sure that the uniform is serviceable, and since we meet on a high school campus, for security reasons we are readily identified by campus security.

The orientation meeting outlines to members the 2016 training program, which consists of a study guide, 100 questions or more, plus three classroom tests — all done online. In addition, each class takes a 10-question quiz that covers portions of the rulebook, casebook and umpires' manual at every regular meeting, which allows us to gauge their knowledge and further work on those aspects prior to the season. Each test is graded and returned with the rule, section and article number so umpires can look up and read the rule or caseplay.

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## QUICK TIP

### PROMOTE MEETINGS

Get the word out about your meetings in as many ways as possible: newsletters, email broadcasts, website announcements and personal phone calls. Be sure to explain why members would want to participate. How will they benefit? Why should they take time to attend?

The certification exam is comprised of 50 questions coming from the study guide with a score of 80 as a passing grade.

Prior to the certification exam, members are given a final quiz which encompasses the questions most commonly missed on the exams and quizzes. That is done to further reassure us they know the rules prior to going on to the field.

We then have a field clinic where they perform the mechanics approved by the CBUA Executive Council and adopted by each unit throughout the state. CBUA mechanics deviate somewhat from the *NFHS Umpires Manual*. In watching members perform we can make the necessary adjustments in their mechanics so as to correct any bad habits that they have developed. That is done under game conditions and our instructors are positioned at the plate, "A," "B" and "C" positions, and each one is given suggestions based on their observations. Cage work is also part of the clinic. Timing, positioning, stances and repositioning after each pitch is observed. We try to use live pitching to closely simulate the game situations.

Finally, as the instructional chairman of the Los Angeles Unit, I send out emails to members to keep them informed of any changes, trouble game situations that have occurred and offer suggestions of how to handle them should similar circumstances occur. Communication is extremely important and I am always available by email, texts or phone calls. In fact, members are encouraged to call me at any time.

The Los Angeles Unit strives to and encourages umpires to study diligently in the knowledge of the rules and mechanics of high school baseball and hopefully master those skills. We also encourage those who aspire to attain the next level, and to all our umpires, to attend camps.

Umpiring, and officiating for that matter, is constantly evolving to meet the demands of the sports and that means training has to constantly evolve to help officials attain the proficiency to officiate at those levels.

*Tony Garcia is the president and instructional chairman for the CBUA-Los Angeles Unit. He worked D-I baseball and softball and two years in the Independent Baseball League and is an observer and mentor in college softball.* ☒

## + Learn to Listen

continued from p.1

members think you'll do a good job representing them. Take that commitment seriously, and if you sense or see dissension in the ranks, take the time to ask around and see what's up. As long as you're all willing to cooperate and work through it, your association will become stronger through the process.

I'd like to say it's always going to be smooth sailing for your association, but after many years of being a board member, I can vouch for that not being the case. In order to continue to grow and improve, you have to listen to your members, and then act on what will strengthen your association. There needs to be the perception of caring what your members think, or you'll end up with more disgruntled than happy. That's never a good situation. It will weaken your association and disrupt during an already busy season.

*Carl Smith, Anchorage, Alaska, is the treasurer and assigner for the Anchorage Sports Officials Association.* ☒

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