

Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association
(MPSSAA)
Baltimore, MD

Minutes of the MPSSAA Executive Council Meeting
January 30-31, 2025

Refer Questions: R. Andrew Warner, Executive Director, 410-767-0376

Districts Represented: (District 1) Michael Duffy for Kevin Kendro, (District 2) Kathy Green, (District 3), Shirley Diggs, (District 4) Kevin Hook for Michael Watson, (District 5) John Davis, (District 6) Jeff Markle, (District 7) Amy Sexton, (District 8) Bryan Ashby, (District 9) Tiffany Byrd

Also Present: Jeffrey Sullivan, President, MPSSAA
Debbie Basler, President Elect, MPSSAA
Michael Sye, Past President, MPSSAA
Donna Claybaugh, Principal Representative
R. Andrew Warner, Executive Director, MPSSAA
Jason Bursick, Assistant Director, MPSSAA
Melissa Mertz, Director of Compliance & Communications, MPSSAA
Melissa Jones, Program Specialist, MPSSAA
Ken Kazmarek, Coordinator of Officials, MPSSAA
Lynette Mitzel, Secretary

1. President Sullivan called the meeting to order on January 30th, at 12:32pm. Thirteen voting members were present to start the meeting. Mr. Warner thanked Michael Duffy and Kevin Hook for representing their districts at the meeting.
2. Dr. Sullivan asked everyone to review the minutes from the previous meeting and asked for a motion. Mr. Sye made a motion to accept the minutes, with a second from Mr. Davis. The motion carried 13-0.
3. The council shared important updates around the state.

District 1: The Allegany superintendent is retiring; Washington, Frederick, and Carroll counties are looking to expand the conference beginning in the 2027-2028 academic year; Frederick County athletic director Keivette Hammond is on the NFHS girls flag football rules committee; the football coaches would like six quarters.

District 2: They have a year of the coach initiative with a student lead ceremony to take place at the end of the year; the health and safety coordinator will be at Virginia Tech to visit the helmet lab; the athletic director position is potentially going to be moved to the administration union next year; Dr. Sullivan is working with a school system in China to take student athletes on a pickleball trip there over spring break.

District 3: The superintendent has approved girls flag football starting with a clinic in the spring with the Commanders; 12 athletic trainer positions were offered for the upcoming school year; they are starting a student leadership council; they are looking to move the athletic directors to administration union; the Wise football coach was the Commander coach of the year.

District 4: Michael Watson was promoted; the new supervisor of athletics (and physical education and health) is Ryan Hanley, who was the athletic director at Great Mills; Kevin Hook will be moving away from athletics beginning next year; fourteen schools may have girls flag football in the fall.

District 5: Anne Arundel county is starting middle school soccer and hired athletic directors at all the middle schools; they will continue to add seven sports for the next school year; they will not be adding girls flag this coming year; athletic trainers are in the budget but it did not go through; Howard county held its' first county championship this fall; full time athletic trainers were in the budget but were recently removed; with a recent law suit – they might be put back in the budget for the 25-26 school year.

District 6: Student leadership rejuvenated last year; budget concerns, especially surrounding transportation costs; six more athletic trainers are needed to be fully covered – three in budget for 25-26 school year. Dr. Sullivan added a statement that due to executive orders with government employees returning to offices, their basketball, and maybe football in the fall, start times have been shifted to later.

District 7: Harford and Cecil are in a budget crisis; all schools are staffed with an athletic trainer; Cecil has four new athletic directors; UPBAC is going through a major transition from two divisions to three; Ms. Basler mentioned they have purchased the Open Gate system and inquired who else used it and at what games they are being used. Mr. Sye said outside and basketball; Ms. Diggs said basketball. Mr. Markle shared his experience at Parkville HS with the system and said the biggest hurdle is getting people to work.

District 8: The supervisors on the shore met on Tuesday to discuss scheduling due to some inequities that have been noticed and to review their transfer policy; Dr. Sullivan asked about the transfer policy, to which Mr. Ashby told everyone they have a 365 day sit rule unless a bonafide move and the PPWs continually check on legal residency.

District 9: They are in a similar place with the budget; their academic eligibility is being reviewed; they are looking at freshman transition and how it impacts eligibility and they do allow a waiver for first time freshman fall; they are working on middle school athletics with seven opportunities and are looking at other things as well.

Principals Association: Ms. Clayburgh indicated the principal group met last weekend and many individuals were not aware of the master agreement. She will share it with them and bring questions back to the next meeting; Dr. Sullivan informed her their district had a mass turnover of principals and inquired as to how that document can be shared and the principals be educated on it.

4. Dr. Sullivan provided a review of the 2024-2025 executive council goals and objectives. He indicated four goals: 1. Sportsmanship action plans. 2. Review of COMAR; 3. Review of financial structure. 4. Statewide initiatives for student leadership council programming. He also reviewed three long-term considerations: 1. Planning for emerging sports. 2. Review of classification process. 3. Creating MPSSAA strategic plan.

5. Mr. Warner shared updates from the MPSSAA.
 - a. Mr. Warner reminded everyone of the summer District meetings takeaways presented in the Fall: 1. Emerging sports related to cheer and girls flag football. 2. Cheerleading needs to make a call on winter season adjustment prior to a transition to the MPSSAA. 3. Student leadership – some want statewide event. 4. Priorities from district to district
 - b. Official recruitment and retention: Mr. Kazmarek reiterated there is a shortage across all sports. He informed the group following a meeting with MSDE there could be movement for an official's education program – ref reps – to be used as a tool to recruit young officials. The program is already being run in 43 states and has worked well. Mr. Warner indicated it would be an elective course, which does not need a certification code like other courses. Ms. Basler inquired about using it at the parks and recreation level as well. She also asked in which sports it was being used, to which Mr. Warner replied all NFHS sports, minus diving and cross country, which are being added.
 - c. Ms. Jones informed the group this is the final year with PepWear. A request has been sent out to obtain proposals from other companies. They have until the end of February to provide a proposal to the MPSSAA.
 - d. Mr. Warner reviewed the relationship between the MPSSAA and PlayOn. He provided an outline of everything PlayOn currently owns and things they are in the works to obtain. The MPSSAA is still self-sufficient, and we are getting sponsorship money from the NFHS Network in addition to GoFan. Dr. Sullivan thanked Mr. Warner for the update.
 - e. Mr. Warner provided the council with an update on the finance committee's fall meeting and items for their upcoming spring meeting. One goal of the organization was to look at the financial structure of the MPSSAA and how things are currently being done. The finance committee wanted to review the current pay scale for state playoff workers. More people are reluctant to work games and the committee felt like an increase in pay would help that issue. Another item being discussed is how districts are handling rounds in which the MPSSAA generates the revenue. The committee would like to look at a split – 80/20, 75/25, 70/30 – were discussed. A minimum threshold was also reviewed so no district would suffer if not enough gate money was generated. Everyone who spoke was in agreement this seemed like a good way to offset some of the costs when games don't bring in enough money. Dr. Sullivan asked if a straw vote was needed, but Mr. Warner indicated just a mention at the meeting that there was strong support from the council would suffice.
 - f. Mr. Warner updated the council on the mental health course that has been a priority of the medical advisory council. After further discussion with Mr. Dan Schuster at the NFHS, their course would meet the requirements of the legislation. As soon as the NFHS courses is completed and online, Mr. Warner will send an email so local jurisdictions can start implementing the course.
6. Ms. Mertz updated the group on the sportsmanship action plan. They would like to create a dashboard on the website for sportsmanship. A newsletter, resources, district updates, etc would be housed there. Mr. Warner indicated the MPSSAA has received a lot of data from the sportsmanship survey, but what are the next steps? How is the data helping us and what are we doing with it? Same with ejections – that information has been submitted by officials but then

- what? Mr. Warner asked how we could get more participation from officials? He and Mr. Kazmarek will look into which associations have not reported anything via the QR code survey.
7. Dr. Sullivan moved to the COMAR review portion of the meeting. Each subcommittee has held their meetings, and some regulations need a deeper look. The intention is to have a proposal ready to present to districts this summer so in the fall action can be taken before the December Board of Control meeting. At this time, the council split into groups to review with the subcommittee chair people.
 8. At 5:04 the committee reconvened without Mr. Ashby and Mr. Davis. Ms. Diggs made a motion followed by a second from Mr. Sye to adjourn the meeting for the day. Dinner will be at 5:45 at Primanti Brothers. The motion passed 11-0.
 9. Dr. Sullivan called the meeting to order at 9:01 am. Ms. Basler was not present, therefore 12 voting members were in attendance.
 10. Mr. Warner provided an update on legislative bills. He showed the council where they could find all bill related information on the general assembly website. Mr. Warner provided updates on bills currently introduced and expects a few more. He will keep all jurisdictions updated on the introduced bills, encourage school systems to work with their local legislative liaison on bills of concern to their jurisdiction, and will provide further information as needed.
 11. Mr. Warner asked Ms. Green to discuss the lacrosse shot clock that some members of the girls lacrosse committee would like to see implemented in Maryland. She stated they would like to mimic the pilot program New York state is doing with a 30 second shot clock. She said the committee would like to collect more data on it, but she and Mr. Duffy are unsure what that data entails. Several members of the council expressed concern over purchasing shot clocks, teams that are not ready for the pace of play that would entail, and whether this was just for high level programs.
 12. Ms. Mertz and Ms. Green provided updates on student leadership programming. Ms. Green, who is a member of the NFHS student services committee, discussed the national student leadership committee, in which a Baltimore County student has been elected to serve on behalf of NFHS Section II. The council discussed statewide efforts. Dr. Sullivan reminded the group there was a state conference for several years and now numerous counties are holding their own conference, and many have student athlete leadership councils as well. Mr. Warner recommended going back to the student leadership standing committee and seeing what they suggest.
 13. The third rotation of the COMAR review took place at this time. Ms. Claybaugh had another meeting to attend and left at 10:33am.
 14. The individuals chairing the subcommittees reviewed the COMAR changes and suggestions made by the members of the council during the breakout session.

15. Dr. Sullivan asked to review three emerging sports – girls’ wrestling, girls’ flag football, and cheerleading.
 - a. Girls’ wrestling: Mr. Duffy informed the group the biggest hurdle at this time is scheduling. There has been expansion for many schools, but with fewer than 6 on a team it becomes challenging to schedule matches. There is scoring at the state tournament for a separate girls’ wrestling, and the numbers continue to grow, but not enough to fill all 24 lines. Until all regions and alternates are filled, growth is still needed.
 - b. Girl’s flag football: Dr. Sullivan said his county is moving forward with a 10 game regular season and hopes to get a state endorsement for the fall of 2026 if the 80% state wide participation number is met. The NFHS rules will also need to be used versus the “Ravens rules.”
 - c. Cheerleading: Ms. Mitzel indicated the cheer organization does not wish to move forward with joining the MPSSAA at this time. They are satisfied with their current structure and do not want to make any amendments to their seasons.

16. Dr. Sullivan thanked the council for the two days of work. Ms. Diggs made a motion to adjourn the meeting, followed by a second from Ms. Sexton. The motion passed 10-0 (Ms. Byrd stepped out during the adjournment)