

Greater Richmond Aquatic League

Board of Directors Meeting

January 5, 2026 at The Federal Club

Next Board Meeting Monday, February 2nd at 7pm—
location at Fox Hall

The Greater Richmond Aquatic League (GRAL) is an organization of swimmers, coaches, and parents whose aim is to promote and participate in the sport of summer swimming. GRAL provides an opportunity for young people to compete against others of similar ability in an atmosphere of fair play, good sportsmanship, and safety.

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm

Roll Call:

- Present: AshCreek, Ashland, Atlee, Battlefield Green, , Canterbury, Chestnut Oaks, Church Run, Colonies, Federal Club, Fox Hall, Goochland, Hungary Creek, Kings Charter, Mechanicsville, Milestone, Old Church, Pebble Creek, Raintree, Rockville Dolphin Club, Tuckahoe Village West, Twin Hickory, Wembly, Wyndham
- Absent: Bell Creek, Burkwood, Dominion Club, Hanover, Wellesley

President Report: Roy Sabo (Milestone) president@gralva.com

- Federal Club motion, Atlee second to approve September meeting minutes. Unanimous approval for annual minutes.
- A lot of proposals were brought before the board in September; the Exec Board is specifically recommending that four be brought up for a vote tonight.
 - Meet order of events
 - Changes to the seed times for Champs qualifiers
 - Relays Divisions
 - Slight alteration to formula for determining divisions

Secretary Report: Sarah Butler (Mechanicsville) secretary@gralva.com

- Absent
- As any new folks take on roles at your team, please update the team roles in SwimTopia ASAP (e.g., board rep, parent rep, Champs coordinator, head coach, assistant coaches, officials coordinator, etc.).

Treasurer Report: Cindy Anderson (Raintree) treasurer@gralva.com

- GRAL had a surplus in our bank account for a couple years after Covid
- At the end of 2024, we had \$43,694.
- At the end of 2025, we have \$34,120.
- If expenses stay similar AND we increase registration by \$1, at the conclusion of 2026 we will end with around \$23k, which is in line with how much we had in the bank before Covid.
- In light of all that information, this does leave us with a possible need for larger increases in registration beginning next year.
- Budget will be sent out to all board reps in the next couple of weeks. We will vote on it in February.
- We are keeping the budget for ribbons and medals the same. Even though we don't need to order as many, we are not sure of the cost of them (if there have been cost increases).

VP of Officials Report: Tom Connolly (Pebble Creek) officials@gralva.com

- It is never too early to start recruiting for officials and certified positions, so begin talking to families now, especially families of younger swimmers.
- GRAL is looking at other options for possible certification for S&T.
- Teams need two meet refs, so if you don't have two, begin making plans now to get a second ref certified.

VP of Training and Certification: Steve Harness (Bell Creek) training@gralva.com

- Absent; no report.

VP of Equipment Report: Moira Sweazey (Hanover) equipment@gralva.com

- No updates; hopefully should be a smooth year in terms of equipment.

VP of Technology Report: Mark Rakes (Colonies) technology@gralva.com

- Email was sent to board reps last Thursday about rolling over your season to 2026. Please forward it to the appropriate people on your team.
- Federal Club asked if Mark can check if teams have done the rollover process correctly, and he stated he can follow up with teams if there are any issues.
- Meets will be added to ST from the GRAL side; teams do not need to do that.

VP of Champs Report: Heather Jensen (Church Run) champs@gralva.com

- Changes are coming to Champs this year, as a one- or two-person structure is untenable properly planning this event. As such we will build a committee of people who are willing to assist.
- Please assign your Champs coordinator well-before the season, as we will begin planning for Champs much earlier than in past seasons (likely April or May).
- More details on specific changes will be shared in the next couple of months.

Computer Coordinator Report: Ralph Jones ralph@gralva.com

- No updates.

Old Business:

- None

New Business

- **2026 GRAL Board Meeting Dates** (tentative plan—dates likely to stick, but in person/virtual may change)
 - Monday, January 5th (in person, at Federal Club)
 - Monday, February 2nd (in-person (to collect \$200 dues; checks made out to GRAL), at Fox Hall)
 - Monday, March 2nd (virtual)
 - Monday, April 6th (virtual)
 - Monday, May 4th (TBD)
 - Monday, June 1st (in-person to collect registration and we distribute ribbons, TBD)
 - Monday, July 6th (in-person, TBD)
- **2026 Meet Dates**
 - Meet 1: Wednesday, June 3rd
 - Meet 2: Wednesday, June 10th
 - Meet 3: Wednesday, June 17th
 - Meet 4: Wednesday, June 24th
 - Meet 5: Wednesday, July 1st
 - Meet 6: **Tuesday**, July 7th (must be on Tuesday due to tight timeline for Champs)
 - Champs: Saturday, July 18th and Sunday, July 19th
- **Board-Proposed Motion #1: Meet Order of Events**
 - Recommendation by the league to swap events 2-11 (100 and 50 freestyles and IMs) between the odd and even weeks. That means that the long individual free currently in meets 1, 3, 5 switch with IMs in meets 2, 4, 6. Relays will stay the same. Rationale: to evenly distribute freestyles and medleys between meets.
 - Federal Club motion, Pebble Creek second to change the wording in the bylaws as recommended.
 - Discussion among teams to rather switch the relays between even and odd meets, as some swimmers may not be ready to perform individual medleys in the first week. Some coaches expressed to their GRAL reps that they prefer medleys in relays the first week rather than in individual events.
 - Points were raised questioning whether the league should be more concerned about individual swimmers in their events, or about the points that can be earned from legal relays?
 - If you switch relays instead of individual events, you are only swapping 5 events rather than 10 and a secondary goal is to hopefully shorten meets.

- If you switch the relays instead of individual events, coaches only have to make sure a swimmer can swim one legal stroke in a relay vs. having to be legal in all four strokes in an IM.
- Concern that there will be less participation in week 1 if relays are what are switched. If a team can't find a swimmer who can swim fly or breast, then all four kids lose out and can't swim.
- Consensus among the board that there are pros and cons to both options for changing the rule.
- In Exec Board rationale, we landed on changing individual events and not relays because coaches should not put swimmers into events in which they are not ready.
- If you move the individual events (not relays) then young kids who can't legally swim an IM (maybe only legal in back and freestyle) would still have a freestyle relay in meet 1, and thus at least have a third event. We want to build enjoyment and buy-in from kids. It was reiterated that this was the reason Coach Trent (Ashland) originally proposed this change to the league.
- Vote: 20 in favor; 4 opposed. Motion passed.
- **Champs Qualification Seeding**
 - Currently seed time for Champs is based on the fastest time in the current year OR the previous year's Champs time, whichever is faster. Proposal from Exec Board to only use the seed time from the current season.
 - Pebble Creek motion, Federal Club second to base Champs seed time on only the current season.
 - Concern that swimmers/coaches may strategize to use this to their advantage.
 - Very few swimmers have a seed time that would change their division at Champs, and this will affect well below 5% of all swimmers.
 - From an administrative point of view (with hopes of reducing work), we do not want to be reliant on a single person who has the knowledge to do something for the league (Ralph is the only one who knows how to manually change the date capture for the seed time). Furthermore, coaches found this very confusing in SwimTopia in 2025. The goal is to simplify our processes and promote continuity in the league into the future.
 - Vote: 23 in favor; 1 opposed (Twin Hickory). Motion passed.
- **Relays**
 - Recommendation from Exec Board is to remove divisions from relays.
 - Federal Club motion, Pebble Creek seconds the proposal.
 - This would simplify effort across the league (for Ralph, computer reps, coaches). We currently have one set of rules for regular season and another set for Champs.
 - Goal is to lessen the work across the league, which is full of volunteers, and teams are having more and more difficulty finding and keeping volunteers.
 - Current system is very complicated for new coaches to learn.

- SwimTopia has stated that we have by far have the most complicated rules that they have seen across the country.
- If we remove the divisions, then novice swimmers would not be as likely to get ribbons.
- Would all relays now need to be mixed? Yes, except for teams that don't have the swimmers on the roster and have to request an exemption.
- The other proposal discussed in September was time standards. The problem with time standards is that when coaches need to change relay swimmers at the last minute, they would need to add up times in the middle of the meet instead of just knowing their division/sex.
- Divisions 3 and 4 won't be impacted as much as divisions 1 and 2 because they just don't have as many relays that swim.
- Consensus among group is that no matter how we change the rules, relays must be mixed gender.
- Federal Club motion, Pebble Creek second to table the proposal so we can have specific language for bylaw wording changes next month. Unanimous approval.
- **League Division Formula**
 - Current calculation formula in the handbook:

$$\frac{\text{Total Club Points} \times (100)}{\text{Total League Points}} + \frac{\text{Club \# Swimmers} \times (100)}{\text{League \# Swimmers}} = \text{Division Calculation}$$

$$[(\text{Current year's Point/Swimmer Results}) \times .75] + [(\text{Previous year's Point/Swimmer Results}) \times .25] = 2 \text{ year weighted average Ranking Number used for determining next season's club divisions.}$$
 - Recommendation to remove relays from total club points.
 - Federal Club motion, Pebble Creek second to approve the change in how to calculate the points to determine divisions.
 - Rationale: if weather prevents a meet(s) from completing relays, teams' points are skewed compared to teams who completed all relays. If some teams in a division completed relays, but others didn't, the teams who don't have relay points are unfairly penalized in points and thus determining division calculations.
 - Vote: 20 in favor; 4 oppose. Motion passed.

Good of the league

- From President: the league runs because of the board; each team, through their GRAL rep, has the proposal and motioning power, so please bring any topics to the meetings.
- Question from Canterbury about trophies for all swimmers. Many teams only hand out medals, some teams do a plaque, one team does a pin each year.
- Federal Club asked whether other teams are gaining any interest in their open coach postings. One team reached out to RMC and UR to see if there was any interest from the swimmers, and did not hear anything back.

Motion to adjourn by Federal club, second Pebble Creek.

Respectfully submitted by Julie Zubris, past president (acting as secretary)