

Greater Richmond Aquatic League

Board of Directors Meeting

January 13th, 2025, virtual

Next meeting: Monday February 3rd, 2025 at 7pm at Colonies

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 7:02pm

Roll Call:

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

President's Report: Julie Zubris (Rockville) President@gralva.com

- Welcome to any new Board members. The Exec Board is welcoming a new VP of Officials, Tom Connolly, and later in the meeting we will be voting in a VP of Champs.
- Role of Board Reps: Board members are the liaison between the league and teams. At GRAL, we expect that Board reps are familiar with GRAL protocol and the rules in the handbook. If you see an issue happening with your team, it is your responsibility to speak up and try to remedy the situation. If you need assistance, reach out to the appropriate league person. It is your responsibility to help your team understand what is a league issue and what is a team issue—most issues are at the team level. If you see something happening at your pool, you need to step up and try to take care of it. Furthermore, when we engage in discussions about various suggestions and ideas at Board meetings, you need to review them with your team to determine your teams' feelings in preparation of potential votes at future meetings. It is up to you as Board members to bring up items for a vote by making a motion.

- At the end of 2025 we will need several new Exec Board members: President, Secretary, Treasurer, VP of Training & Certification, and currently what is called VP of Equipment. Please share the positions with your team! They don't have to be GRAL board representatives.
- VP of Equipment is an outdated position with minimal responsibilities, and we really need a webmaster position instead. VP of Equipment is being turned into VP of Equipment and Technology for 2026.
- 2025 divisions and meet schedule were released at the annual meeting in September and are available on the website.
- There are currently a few teams advertising for coach openings on the website. If you don't already have coaches for the year, you need to be looking now. If you need to post a listing on the website, please email secretary@gralva.com.
- February meeting will be in person because we will collect team dues: \$200 per team. Please bring a check made out to GRAL to the meeting. If it's late, there is a \$25 fine. Location will be at The Colonies
- September annual meeting minutes: Hanover made motion to approve, The Federal Club seconds. None opposed; accepted into the record.

Secretary Report: Michelle Shores (Battlefield Green) secretary@gralva.com

- Contact form link is on the website. Please update you parent rep, board rep and coaches as necessary.

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

- The budget will be attached to the minutes. This will be discussed further later in the meeting.

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

- Absent, no report.

VP of Training and Certification: Debi Knott (Wembly) training@gralva.com

- The most up to date list of officials will be updated and posted before the next meeting.

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

- Ribbons and medals will be ordered in the next couple of months and this year should go much more smoothly with ribbons.

Computer Coordinator Report: Ralph Jones ralph@gralva.com

- No report

VP of Champs Report: open position champs@gralva.com

- Champs is scheduled for July 19-20, 2025 at SwimRVA. 12 and unders will be Saturday, 13 and over on Sunday.
- Every year it conflicts with a USA Meet. Some years it conflicts with an older swimmers meet, other years it's been the younger swimmers. GRAL schedules

the dates and reserves the facility for Champs several years in advance (currently booked out to 2027), which USA Swimming does not. Please be aware that this could impact a teams' coaches and their ability to attend Champs. Make sure that enough coaches take the coaches test so that someone will be eligible to be on deck at Champs.

Old Business

- Registration fees: After taking a good look at GRAL finances, our income has exceeded our spending for the last few years (from things like t-shirt and heat sheet sales at Champs), leaving us in a healthy financial position. However, we also need to realize that we vastly underbudgeted our ribbons and medals in the 2024 season. For 2025 we need to budget an additional \$7k in ribbons and 5\$ in medals. Also, our Champs facility rental fee budget needs to increase \$1k. Therefore, our overall budget needs to increase by \$13k. The Exec Board recommends that we cover that additional amount needed this year with the money currently in our account. However, we don't want to deplete our finances too much, so we recommend that we revisit the issue for the 2026 season and may need to increase swimmer registration cost at that time.

New Business

- 2025 Budget: Cindy (Treasurer) screen shared the budget and went over the document. It is attached to these meeting minutes and will be voted on at the February meeting.
- New VP of Champs: Sarah Gee from Mechanicsville needs to be voted in. Motion made by Atlee and seconded by Hanover. No opposed.
- Swimtopia: As explained at the annual meeting and in the email sent in the fall, GRAL is an unsustainable situation in regards to the software we use and having a trained employee. Christy was superhuman in her dedication, time, and knowledge of GRAL and Hy-Tek. Finding an employee last year only happened because Christy strongly encouraged Ralph to help out. He does not know everything he needs to know for Hy-Tek and has a very large learning curve for this summer without Christy's assistance. He has spent the last three months researching and testing the Swimtopia software for use by GRAL. It is different than Hy-Tek and will also have a large learning curve, but he and the Exec Board feel that in the long run it is the only feasible option for GRAL. It is much more user friendly for computer reps (to find and train volunteers), and will also make hiring, training, and keeping a computer coordinator easier.
 - Swimtopia includes 3 different things: 1) the Swimtopia platform that is used for team management (equivalent to Swim Manager or Team Manager that is currently used), such as registration, selling merch, volunteer sign-ups, communication, etc. It includes the ability for teams to easily make a very nice user-friendly website. 2) Meet Maestro (equivalent to the currently used Meet Manager) which is used to complete entries, seed meets, enter results, and actually run the meet. This is an online program that can be done on any computer (or tablet). 3) Swimtopia Mobile App (equivalent to Meet Mobile) for results.

- The cost commitment is very similar to what most teams currently have. The price is a flat rate of \$3 per swimmer, which will be paid by GRAL in January each year directly to Swimtopia. At this time, there are 6 teams using Swimtopia for their website/team management. They will save \$150 per year if it is adopted league wide. For Swim Manager teams, they currently pay 3% of each swimmer registration to Swim Manager, so that cost will likely be very similar to the \$3 per swimmer. Team Manager teams will experience a cost increase, as they currently are paying a licensing fee only to Hy-Tek and now they have to pay \$3 per swimmer. That \$3 per swimmer will be collected by the league as part of the registration fee. So for most teams, their prices will not increase, the money is just allocated differently (e.g., being sent to the league instead of to Swim Manager).
- The Board had a very lively discussion about how to use Swimtopia. Ralph spoke regarding his testing, Greg Owens from TDC, who is experienced with ST, shared his knowledge. Ralph shared that every person whom he has spoken with (which is a lot) who use Swimtopia absolutely love it. Their customer service is top-notch. They guarantee live support during every GRAL meet in case of an issue (can call them to get real time help). Old Church asked if internet was required (yes).
- There was discussion of whether this required a vote of the full Board. TDC made a motion to adopt Swimtopia, and it was seconded by Colonies. There were no opposers.
- Therefore, GRAL is adopting Swimtopia as the collective platform that all teams will use to manage swimmers and meets for the 2025 season. That is the only software that will be supported by GRAL (no longer will we support the use of Hy-Tek). We realize there will be a huge learning curve for Ralph, the Exec Board, and teams, but the Board agreed as a whole that in order for GRAL to be able to continue as a successful organization into the future, the change must be made. So we all need to be willing to change, accept there will be a learning curve, and understand that things will not be done in the same way they always have been. Julie will schedule a meeting with ST to set up a league-wide 60 day trial, which we will then convert into a paid membership. That will immediately allow teams to begin working on setting up their website and everything for the year. ST will provide webinars and trainings specifically for GRAL. Information with details will be sent out as soon as it is available.
- 2025 GRAL Meeting dates (tentative plan—dates likely to stick, but in person/virtual may change)
 - Monday, February 3rd (in-person—collect dues) at the Colonies
 - Monday, March 3rd (virtual)
 - Monday, April 7th (virtual)
 - Monday, May 5th (TBD)
 - Monday, June 2nd (in-person—registration is collected and we hand out ribbons)
 - Monday, July 7th (in-person)

- 2025 Meet Dates (schedule will be posted on website by October 1st)
 Meet 1 = Wednesday, June 4th
 Meet 2 = Wednesday, June 11th
 Meet 3 = Wednesday, June 18th
 Meet 4 = Wednesday, June 25th
 Meet 5 = Wednesday, July 2nd
 Meet 6 = Tuesday, July 8th (must be on Tuesday because of the tight timeline for Champs)
 Champs = Saturday, July 19th and Sunday, July 20th
- Other important dates for the season
 - Registration due from teams by 11:59pm Friday May 23 (that is Memorial Day weekend, so plan accordingly) There are rules for adding swimmers later.
 - Registration paid at June Board meeting (6/2) \$7 a swimmer again this year.
 - Coaches test due by 11:59pm Friday May 30th.
 - Coaches meeting Saturday, 5/31 at 9am—in person.

Good of the League

- Hanover brought up the proposition to allow senior year swimmers that are over 18 swim the summer they graduate high school. There was lots of discussion from multiple clubs regarding the intricacies of having a 19 year old swim. The USA rules state that the swimmer is 18 or younger. Currently if a swimmer is still 18 when they come back from their first year of college, they are still allowed to swim. However, if a high school senior turns 19, they are not allowed to swim. Hanover and another team checked with their insurance companies and there is no limit on age for swim team. Hanover mentioned that if a swimmer has a disability and it could be considered discrimination if the board did not allow the swimmer to swim their senior year. There was discussion whether this should be a requested exception or a rule. The Board asked teams to go back to their pool and try to determine how many swimmers this would affect in the next few years. The discussion will continue and be brought up for a vote at the February meeting.

Adjourn. Motion made by Dominion Club, second by Hungary Creek. Adjourned 8:27

Submitted by Michelle Shores, secretary