



VSA Meeting Minutes

Date: May 4, 2026

Call to Order: 5:15 PM

Attendance: Rich DeGraff-Murphy (President); Emily Milbank (Vice President); Matt Spitznagle (Treasurer); Keith Roberts (Risk Management); Bill Edwards (SRA); Andrew Minnis (ED); Lori Levinson (Ops Director).

Remote: None

Absent: Kyle Koenig (Secretary) - Family Health Issue

Guest(s): NA

Approval of Minutes

- Previous meeting date: **April 6, 2026**
 - Motion: **Approve minutes as written**
 - Result: **Approved unanimously**
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Public Comment

A. NA

General Board Reports

President's Report – Rich DeGraff Murphy

- **State Cup**
 - A recent draw video with two professional guests was well received on Facebook.
 - Suggestions for future: Add visual brackets per age group at the end of the video for clarity.
- **Northeast Wildcats Facility Proposal**
 - Site visit to Derby to discuss Northeast Wildcats' proposed three-field grass complex.
 - Wildcats seeking financial, administrative, or event support.
 - VSA needs long-term (30-50 year) lease before considering financial investment.
 - Consideration of using existing JP fields instead.
 - Waiting on more information: maintenance schedule, fundraising progress.
 - Discussion about setting precedent; highlighted need for case-by-case evaluation and creation of clear criteria for future facility support requests.
- **Technical Director Position**
 - Jason (previous Technical Director) has moved on.

- Board is considering moving away from a single director model.
- Proposal to develop a network of 5-6 club-based "educators" (leaders identified in major clubs), trained/licensed by the organization to deliver grassroots and D-level coaching courses.
- US Soccer will host a prep event in early September.
- VSA to fund educator licenses; focus is on club convenience and expanding in-state education pathways.
- Andrew to fill gaps for lower-rec programs and ODP administrative tasks.
- **Coach Development Model**
 - Peer/collegiate "coach's coach" atmosphere preferred among ODP coaches instead of top-down direction.
 - Plan to hold collaborative sessions and occasional high-profile expert presentations.
 - No priority to hire a new Technical Director unless an optimal candidate appears.
- **ODP (Olympic Development Program) Structure**
 - Administrative and coaching roles for current cycle are covered.
 - Major ODP events upcoming:
 - May 30: Collaboration with New York ECNL teams and ODP in Manchester.
 - June: East Regional event.
 - June 20–27: Iceland trip (Andrew and Don to attend in coaching capacity).
 - ODP coaches seek more interaction and shared learning; VSA will foster peer-support and knowledge sharing.
- **Upcoming Coaching Education Initiatives**
 - Grassroots and D Educator license training to combine (per new US Soccer structure).
 - Planned geographically-dispersed educator cohort includes individuals from Manchester, Morrisville, Middlebury, and Burlington (Far Post).
 - Goal: Local scheduling flexibility, growth in C-license participation, and better access to higher-level licensure within Vermont.
- **Advisory Group & Club Coordination**
 - Two meetings since last board: Topics included coach education, player pathways, and club event scheduling.
 - Developing a shared, online 'event calendar' to avoid scheduling conflicts between club and state events.
- **2026–27 Budget Review:** Advisory group recommendations expected to inform next seasonal year planning.

Vice President's Report – Emily Milbank

- **Awards & Gala Organization**
 - Emily and Lori are working to maintain and streamline the awards process and maintain consistency and transparency in selection.
 - Formal criteria sheet developed (to be distributed to awards committee for feedback).
 - Suggestion to prepare folders of nominations for review and systematic evaluation.
 - Encourage nominations via standard form and push reminders to clubs.
 - Discussion of referee awards criteria—will be developed by referee committee for publication.

- Hall of Fame award: keep annual nomination open, regardless of whether awarded each year.
- Plan to create an archive of award winners on VSA website; possible physical plaques in VSA office discussed.

Treasurer's Report – Matt Spitznagle

- Transition of funds to new bank account nearly complete.
- Referee committee's financial operations being moved to new account with new cards issued.
- Outstanding US Soccer payments cited; direct deposit arrangements to be updated.

Secretary's Report – Kyle Koenig - Absent

Risk Management Report – Keith Roberts

- Background check process stable.
- New background questionnaire developed for GotSports system to clarify reportable items and reduce follow-up burden.

State Referee Report – Bill Edwards

- **Referee Program Update**
 - ~250 referees currently certified, aiming for 275 with new certifications expected.
 - Feedback: Main issues for recruitment/retention are abuse, logistical challenges (game gaps, cancellations), and solo officiating on full fields.
 - Discussion about time-and-a-half pay for referees working alone on full-size games; would require manual administrative process.
 - Mechanisms for referee mentoring under discussion, with current processes using email and Excel/Google sheets.
 - Positive feedback on first weekend of games: No reported incidents; promising start to the season.
- **SafeSport Training**
 - Some concerns about annual SafeSport course requirements, but main barrier to referee recertification is abuse, not cost or training fatigue.
 - Organization discussed possible financial support for referee training, but consensus was that this would not solve the recertification challenge.
- **Referee Recruitment & Course Offerings**
 - Recertification class opened for those who missed earlier windows.

- New referee course currently unfeasible mid-season, but recert window reopened.
 - Suggestions made to improve communication among referees, including potentially replicating a Google sheet system used by clubs.
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Executive Director Update – Andrew Minnis

■ SOP Completion

- All major Standard Operating Procedures are now documented and available for reference, except for Fall League and Fall Festival which are in progress.

■ Yearly and Upcoming Event Calendar

- 2026–2027 yearly calendar completed, to be added to website and distributed at July meeting.
- AGM (Annual General Meeting) planning underway, likely at the newly renovated "Hotel Vermont Harborvale" in downtown Burlington.
- Plan to include a Women & Girls 'Lead Her Soccer' symposium as part of AGM.

■ U8 Player Verification Process

- Labor-intensive manual verification of U8 birth certificates questioned.
- Consensus: Approve all current players at U8 to secure both insurance and fee revenue, but do not publicize a change; verification remains mandatory at U10.
- System ensures U8s are covered; clubs are billed accordingly. Parents will need to provide birth certificates starting at U10 or for players who play up.

■ Interns & Staffing

- All interns have finished for the season as the school year ends; no immediate plans for event support, but possible follow-up with those who are local.

■ ODP (Olympic Development Program) – Major Redesign

- **Transition to “Sporting Vermont”**
 - ODP is being phased out nationally; Vermont will rebrand its state-level team program as “Sporting Vermont.”
 - Program will run September–April (aligns with club schedules, avoids May–June conflicts).
 - Player pathway clarified:

- December: College showcase with SDA in Syracuse
 - Winter: Boston or Copa Rayados (FL) based on team capacity
 - April: Midwest ECNL Showcase (Chicago)
- **Partnership Model & Club Collaboration**
 - Strong buy-in from clubs, alignment around exclusive Saturday trainings and major events.
 - Aimed at fostering higher pride, ownership, and peer-learning among coaches and players.
- **Funding & Fees**
 - **\$54,000 in multi-year sponsorships secured to cover program operational expenses (~\$4,000/team, 12 teams).**
 - **Families expected to cover travel, uniforms, and personal expenses.**

Extensive board discussion:

- General support for a nominal participant fee (\$100–\$250) to maintain participant commitment and safeguard against future sponsor volatility.
- Possibility to use surplus for travel scholarships if surplus or for a “rainy day” fund.
- Fee structure to be finalized, with need to communicate early and clearly to clubs/participants.

Operations Update – Lori Levinson

- **Office Move & Furniture**
 - New office setup underway, with furniture and equipment delivery expected by next week.
- **Spring Events & Volunteer Needs**
 - State Cup and Spring Fest upcoming: Volunteers needed for field marshaling, check-in, score reporting, parking/litter management, especially as Director and other staff will be covering other commitments during events.
 - NBT Bank is Spring Fest sponsor; signage and setup logistics discussed.

Technical Director Report – N/A

Other Business / Good of the Game

- Well wishes to Kyle's Daughter
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Executive Session

- NA
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Adjournment

- **Motion:** Adjourn
 - **Result:** Approved unanimously
 - **Time:** 7:00 p.m.
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Next Meeting

Date: **June 1, 2026**

Time: **5:00 p.m.**

Location: **VSA Offices - Forever Summer Fieldhouse & ZOOM Option**