

MINUTES
South Carolina Athletic Commission
10:00 A.M., September 24, 2009
Commission Meeting
Synergy Business Park
Kingstree Building
110 Centerview Drive, Conference Room 204
Columbia, South Carolina

Meeting Called to Order

Michael Tyler, Chairman, of Lexington, called the meeting of the S.C. Athletic Commission to order at 10:00 a.m. Other commissioners present included: Robert Williams, vice chairman, of Cayce; George Cox, of Myrtle Beach; Clyde Jones, of Camden; and Lynda Leventis-Wells, of Greenville.

Paul Kennemore, of Greenwood, was not present for the meeting.

Staff members participating in the meeting included: Kristy Bell, Administrative Assistant; Randall Bryant, Assistant Deputy Director; Larry Hall, Inspector; Jimmy Knotts, Inspector, Jim Kyzer, Inspector.

Members of the public attending the meeting included: D.M. Alexis, William Bradley, Amos Collins, Dwight Decker, Gilbert Jacobs, David Johnson, Sheila Keown, Vaughn Keown, Sam King, Mark Mills, Tonya Mills, Corey Schafer, Yolanda Smalls, Daniel Stanley, Denny Starr, and Ray Thompson.

Mr. Tyler announced that public notice of this meeting was properly posted at the S. C. Athletic Commission office, Synergy Business Park, Kingstree Building, and provided to all requesting persons, organizations, and news media in compliance with Section 30-4-80 of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

Invocation

Mr. Jones delivered the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the February 25, 2009 and the June 11, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Cox suggested the February 25, 2009 minutes insert the words conference call at the top where it states commission meeting. He also suggested removing the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOTION

Mr. Cox made a motion the Commission approve the February 25, 2009 conference call minutes as amended. Mrs. Leventis-Wells seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Mrs. Leventis-Wells stated she was available by phone for the June 11, 2009 meeting.

MOTION

Mr. Cox made a motion the Commission approve the minutes of the June 11, 2009 meeting. Mrs. Leventis-Wells seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Chairman's Remarks – Michael Tyler

Mr. Tyler stated the ABC Commission's annual conference was held in July 2009. He noted the main topic of discussion was mixed martial arts. He stated the conference went well.

Administrator's Remarks – Randall Bryant

Advisory Opinions, If Needed, Office of General Counsel

Legislative Update, If Needed, Legislative Liaison Office

There were no advisory opinions or legislative update given during this meeting.

Mr. Bryant stated additional employees have been hired on a part time basis in anticipation of the mixed martial arts events that will be taking place in South Carolina. He introduced Beth Cumalander has been hired in an administrative assistant's position and Chuck Ross has been hired as an inspector to assist with the mixed martial arts events.

Mr. Bryant stated staff has researched mixed martial arts statutes and regulations from other states along with the MMA Unified Rules from the Association of Boxing Commission.

Mr. Bryant stated with the passing of the law by the South Carolina General Assembly, Section 40-81-445 stating:

'The Department and Commission shall require that mixed martial arts events comply with the rules of a recognized professional organization or sanctioning body recognized by the Commission except where those rules conflict with the laws of this state in which case the laws of this state shall apply.'

Mr. Bryant noted the only law pertaining to mixed martial arts in South Carolina at this time is the statute. He noted proposed regulations would be submitted to the General Assembly once the Commission has approved the proposed regulations. He further stated sanctioning bodies, on the amateur side, would be making presentations to the Commission regarding their rules, organization structure, financial stability, states they have produced events in, states the organizations may have been disciplined, among other topics. He noted once the Commission establishes the sanctioning bodies the members are comfortable with, the Commission will then begin accepting event permits. He went on to say the event permits must contain the name of the Commission approved sanctioning body. Staff would then begin working with that sanctioning body and/or promoter to facilitate those events. He said staff would not offer any permits to be submitted, accepted and certainly not approve any permits until staff and the Commission is ready to do so.

Commission Representative's Remarks – Larry Hall

Mr. Hall stated staff is having an issue with unlicensed wrestling events. He noted staff has stopped three events. He noted Mr. Kyzer has been going to the unlicensed events and staff is requiring payment from the promoters to have the inspector present at the event. He noted the promoters at the last two events were fined \$500. Mr. Kyzer also issued a cease and desist order on an event that took place prior to his arrival.

Executive Session

MOTION

Mrs. Leventis-Wells made a motion the Commission enter executive session. Mr. Jones seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Return to Public Session

Mr. Tyler noted for the record that no official action was taken during executive session.

Mr. Cox stated the purpose of this meeting would be for the Commission to ascertain what organizations are present for this meeting about professional and/or amateur mixed martial arts events. He noted the Commission is asking for a representative to inform the Commission about the organization and what the organization's intentions are for the state. He presented the speakers with the following ground rules:

- Amateurs must be licensed in South Carolina. The Commission must have records on the amateurs regarding the number of fights in which each fighter has participated.
- The Commission is considering insurance limits of not less than \$25,000.00 for both medical and death benefits.
- The Commission must also know whether the organization or representative will be the sanctioning body in South Carolina or a promoter employing a sanctioning body.
- The Commission placed a five minute cap on each speaker as to why the Commission should choose a particular organization or promoter for mixed martial arts in South Carolina.

Unfinished Business

New Business

Mr. Mills, co-owner and operator of Columbia Martial Arts and Fitness, stated his business has a mixed martial arts training program. His concern is for the fighters and the rules regarding the fights. He went on to say he worked with Corey Schafer on a kick boxing event within the past few years. He noted his business is a corporation and if his corporation were to become licensed to conduct mixed martial arts events, it would conduct both professional and amateur. He is not interested in managing fighters.

Mr. David Johnson stated he would like to question the Commission regarding the current laws that have been written. He owns Fury Fight School in Charleston, which has approximately 75 to 85 students. He is looking at becoming a promoter in the future. He is looking at ISKA as the sanctioning body of choice because he has been around that organization in another state. He knows of ISCF is another MMA organization; however, he is not aware of all of the laws to compare ISCF to ISKA. His goal is to promote four events per year at the Gaillard Auditorium in the Charleston area and possibly four events in the Columbia area.

Mr. Johnson asked the Commission if the sanctioning bodies have been determined and approved by the Board. Mr. Cox replied negatively. Mr. Johnson asked the Commission how far in advance must the bond or the purse prior to the event must be submitted to the Commission. Mr. Bryant stated the amateurs have no purse and the bond and permit application for the professional event must be submitted ten days prior to the event. Mr. Johnson asked the Commission regarding the submittal of the permit application and the fight cards. Mr. Bryant stated the Commission would prefer the fight cards be submitted with the permit application, although 72 hours prior to the event would be the latest time. Mr. Johnson asked the Commission if the 24 rounds listed in the law is in regard to the professional rounds. Mr. Hall replied the 24 rounds as referred to in the statute refers to professional boxing. Mr. Johnson stated the South Carolina laws regarding weigh-ins refers to the 'said location. He asked the Commission if the weigh-ins could take place at the sponsor's location, such as

Hooter's. Mr. Bryant replied affirmatively. The Commission informed Mr. Johnson that all of the participants must be present at the weigh in and that all participants must have their identification cards with them at the time of the weigh in.

Mr. Dwight Decker stated he is looking at becoming a promoter as well as having a sanctioning body. He further stated he works closely with the NAAFS, which is located in Ohio. He went on to say the NAAFS is a pipeline for the UFC. He has promoted shows in Ohio, which is where the money is. He is looking to promote shows at least one show every month or every other month. He employs individuals from the UFC and the IFO. He has been martial arts for the past 13 years and holds three black belts. He is currently serving in the Navy and is stationed in Charleston. He would like to see the statute and regulations protect the fighters foremost. He stated the laws in North Carolina and Ohio are excellent. He is a fighter and has fought in amateur and professional bouts. He noted several states follow the UFC rules for the professional bouts. He believes the amateur rules should follow the Georgia laws. He has managed fighters since 1996 and currently manages 25 fighters from across the United States and overseas. He is currently a professional fighter and cannot participate in amateur events.

Mr. Bryant stated Mr. Decker would need to submit to the Commission written documentation regarding the organizational structure, rules, etc. to allow the Commission to make an informed decision in its decision as to whether or not it would allow Mr. Decker to become a sanctioning body. He noted this would allow the Commission to ask any further questions deemed necessary.

Mr. Vaughn Keown stated he owns two gyms which are located in Anderson and Clemson. He is also a promoter; however, he is a general contractor by trade. He has promoted two shows. He said the fighters who train at his gyms are amateur, although there is one professional fighter who trains at the gym. He asked the Commission if he would still be able to use the US Muay Thai Association (USMTA) to sanction his events since he would not promote a straight MMA event. He noted his events would include mixed martial arts as well as amateur muay thai bouts. The Commission determined it would have to research that matter prior to making a determination. Mr. Bryant stated the amateur muay thai events would not come under the Commission's jurisdiction; however, both the professional and amateur mixed martial events would come under the Commission's jurisdiction. He does not have a preference to a mixed martial arts sanctioning body at this time.

Mr. Ray Thompson stated he has been promoting kickboxing events for a number of years and has been working with the International Kickboxing Federation (IKF). He further stated the IKF has a sister organization called the International Sport Combat Federation (ISCF). He would prefer ISCF as the sanctioning body. He would submit information to the Commission regarding for ISCF for review.

Approval to Sanction Golden Gloves (MMA) – Rico White

Mr. Rico White of Golden Gloves had submitted documentation regarding that organization for the Commission's review as a sanctioning body. However, he did not appear before the Commission during this meeting.

Approval to Sanction ISKA (MMA) – Corey Schafer

Mr. Corey Schafer of ISKA submitted documentation for the Commission review as a sanctioning body for mixed martial events in South Carolina.

Mr. Schafer spoke to the Commission via conference call. He is seeking the ability to be a sanctioning body for the mixed martial arts events in South Carolina and has no interest in promoting the events. He noted the ISKA is strictly a sanctioning and regulatory mixed martial arts body. ISKA has regulated mixed martial arts and combat sports since 1986 in 50 countries on five continents. ISKA began moving into the development of mixed martial arts when it first began being approved in Nevada. ISKA regulates more than 100 amateur mixed martial events per year and also regulates professional events as well. ISKA now regulates kickboxing in most states. He said the best way to create rules is to produce novice/amateur rules different from intermediate and advanced rules.

Mr. Cox questioned Mr. Schafer regarding the average number of events in which a fighter should participate before turning professional. Mr. Schafer stated he could give the Commission numbers per state as it varies from state to state. He would like to see an amateur fighter have at least seven fights.

Mr. Cox stated the Commission is reviewing and discussing insurance limits and is looking at a minimum of \$25,000.00 for supplemental and accidental death. He asked Mr. Schafer if \$25,000.00 would be a chilling effect of conducting or sanctioning events or if it is what it is. Mr. Schafer stated any promoter who could not afford to pay for \$25,000.00 of insurance cannot afford to produce a show. He does not see that as a stumbling block for any promoter who wants to promote an event. He would rather see a promoter or a fighter spend money on blood testing over a higher insurance policy.

Mixed Martial Arts and Professional Boxing – Andrew Stokes, Billy Stanick, Sam King, Gabe Lowe, and Willie Bradley, Esq.

Mr. Sam King of Columbia Submission Fight Team trains boxers gives promoters for fighters, has assisted with match making and promoting in the past. He has an interest in eventually promoting in South Carolina. He was attending the meeting to learn of amateur rules and help mold good amateur rules in South Carolina. He would probably use ISKA as the sanctioning body. He trains fighters at Columbia Martial Arts and other gyms in the area. He would be interested in being a promoter for both professional and amateur fighters.

Possible Date for an MMA Event in Myrtle Beach – D.E.A. Fight Promotions, Amos Collins

Mr. Denny Starr, of DEA Fight Promotions, stated he and his partner, Amos Collins, have been promoting events in South Carolina for approximately four years. He further stated Mr. Collins has a school in Myrtle Beach and has fought as a professional boxer and an amateur mixed martial arts fighter. Mr. Starr has his own gym in Myrtle Beach and has been a participant in mixed martial arts since the mid 1990s. He received a black belt in 1999. He has been training participants since that time. He said DEA Fight Promotions is looking to be a promoter, not as a sanctioning body. He stated DEA Fight Promotions promoted an event in Jacksonville, North Carolina in August 2009. He said he would look to ISKA as a sanctioning body, but would be open to looking at other sanctioning bodies as well. He would promote professional and amateur events.

Mr. Willie Bradley asked the Commission if events could be held prior to the promulgation of regulations or if the Commission would sanction events upon approval of a sanctioning body. Mr. Bryant stated the Commission would sanction events upon approval of a sanctioning body.

Approval of License Reinstatement – Gilbert Jacobs, Jr.

Gilbert Jacobs, Jr. appeared before the Commission at this time. He stated he is a 53 year old professional fighter who turned professional at the age of 33. He began boxing in 1986 in eastern Pennsylvania, where he trained with Ernie Butler. He trained with such individuals as Jerry Norris and Archie Moore. He would like to renew his license because he wants to box again although he has not boxed in ten years. Most of his fights were non-sanctioned events. His trainer introduced him to drugs and he now wants to redeem himself. He now trains fighters, but would like to get back into boxing.

Mr. Bryant stated Mr. Jacobs has not applied, but would like to apply for licensing.

Mr. Jacobs stated he is a South Carolina resident, however, he holds a Georgia driver's license and a South Carolina identification card from the Division of Motor Vehicles. He further stated he is not driving in South Carolina. He would like to obtain information from the Commission as to what criteria he must meet to obtain licensure in South Carolina as a boxer. During the past ten years has been employed as a professional trainer, both boxing and personal. His last blood work was negative for HIV and Hepatitis B and C. His last CT Scan showed everything was fine. He has been convicted of two felony crimes has served time in prison.

Mrs. Leventis-Wells expressed concern over Mr. Jacobs' age and the fact that he has not boxed in ten years. Mr. Tyler expressed concern over Mr. Jacobs' fight background.

MOTION

Mr. Jones made a motion the Commission deny Mr. Jacobs' licensure and the opportunity to box in South Carolina. Mrs. Leventis-Wells seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Mr. Bryant stated with the approval of a sanctioning body for mixed martial arts events staff would begin accepting permit applications.

MOTION

Mrs. Leventis-Wells made a motion the Commission approve ISKA as a sanctioning body for the mixed martial arts events. Mr. Cox seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

MOTION

Mr. Cox made a motion the Commission approve at this time, in the original stages, a minimum coverage of \$25,000.00 supplemental accidental and death benefit for any MMA event. Mrs. Leventis-Wells seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Public Comments

No public comments were made during this meeting.

Adjournment

MOTION

There being no further business at this time, Mrs. Leventis-Wells made a motion the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Jones seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The September 24, 2009 meeting of the SC Athletic Commission adjourned at 1:15 p.m.