

# **MARYLAND STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION**

## **MINUTES - WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2016**

On Wednesday, December 21, 2016, the Maryland State Athletic Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Arnold “Arnie” Dansicker at 2:05 p.m.. Present were the following: Chairman Dansicker; Commissioner Ben Alperstein; Commissioner Sean Malone; Commissioner Lenny Moore; Commissioner David Norman; Patrick Pannella, Executive Director; Eric London, Counsel; and Dreama Anderson, Administrative Specialist.

### **MOMENT OF SILENCE - PASSING OF GILBERT WARE**

The Commission held a moment of silence in honor of Gilbert Ware, who served as the former Deputy Commissioner of the Washington, D.C. Boxing and Wrestling Commission for over 20 years.

Chairman Dansicker expressed the Commission’s deepest condolences to the family of Deputy Commissioner Ware.

Executive Director Pannella stated that he and Mr. Ware maintained a good working relationship in sharing regulatory information between their two respective athletic commissions, with Mr. Ware attending several professional boxing events regulated by the Commission in Prince George’s County.

### **BALTIMORE BOXING AND FITNESS, LLC** **APPROVAL OF PROMOTER’S LICENSE**

Executive Director Pannella reported that Baltimore Boxing and Fitness, LLC recently applied to the Commission for its promoter’s license as a promoter of professional boxing events in the State of Maryland. Mr. Pannella noted that Baltimore Boxing and Fitness, LLC is planning to bring professional boxing contests back to Michael’s Eighth Avenue in Glen Burnie, Maryland, where a long-standing series of professional boxing events was held for many years. Mr. Pannella reported that he and Chairman Dansicker interviewed the promoter’s

representative for Baltimore Boxing and Fitness, LLC, Murray B. “Jake” Smith, Jr.. Chairman Dansicker reported that he and Mr. Pannella reviewed the license application and corresponding documentation submitted by Baltimore Boxing and Fitness, LLC, and were satisfied that this applicant complies with the Commission’s licensing requirements.

Upon a motion by Chairman Dansicker, and seconded by Commissioner Norman, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve a promoter license for Baltimore Boxing and Fitness, LLC.

### **APPROVAL OF PROFESSIONAL/PRO-AM BOXING EVENTS**

Executive Director Pannella led a Commission discussion in regard to the professional or pro-am boxing events currently scheduled to be held in the State of Maryland.

Upon a motion by Chairman Dansicker, seconded by Commissioner Malone, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the following pro-am boxing event:

Pro-Am Boxing Event  
Friday, January 13, 2017 - 7:30 p.m. Starting Time  
Michael’s Eighth Avenue  
7220 Grayburn Drive - Glen Burnie, Maryland  
Promoter: Baltimore Boxing and Fitness, LLC, advertising as  
Baltimore Boxing and Fitness.

Upon a motion by Chairman Dansicker, seconded by Commissioner Alperstein, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the following professional boxing event:

Professional Boxing Event  
Saturday, February 11, 2017 - 7:30 p.m. Starting Time  
Rosecroft Raceway  
6336 Rosecroft Drive - Ft. Washington, Maryland  
Promoter: King’s Promotions, LLC, advertising as

King's Promotions.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Chairman Dansicker provided the Commission with the following report.

In 2016, the Commission held a large number of professional wrestling events in communities located throughout the State of Maryland. There were no major regulatory issues in boxing, MMA or wrestling; there were no serious medical injuries sustained by contestants competing in boxing or MMA and by participants in wrestling. With regard to both boxing and MMA, the fans of each respective sport who attended Commission-sanctioned events appeared to be very satisfied with the consistently high level of competition presented.

## **COUNSEL'S REPORT**

Counsel London provided the Commission with the following report.

The proposed regulatory amendments approved by the Commission as its October 27, 2016 meeting will be published in the *Maryland Register* in late January of 2017 and will be considered for final approval by the Commission at its meeting scheduled to be held in March of 2017. Counsel London stated that the Commission approved regulatory amendments to the following COMAR regulations: (1) 09.14.01.02; (2) 09.14.04.04; (3) 09.14.04.10; (4) 09.14.06.10; and (5) 09.14.08.04.

The regulatory amendment to COMAR 09.14.01.02 seeks to eliminate the requirement that the Commission meet once a month and to change the requirement for publishing notice of a Commission meeting to allow the notice to be published on the Commission's website instead of in the Maryland Register.

The regulatory amendments to COMAR 09.14.04.04 and to COMAR 09.14.08.04 seeks to clarify that a physician may determine whether a contestant may engage in a contest by considering a number of physical conditions, including determining whether the contestant's blood pressure is within acceptable limits. In particular, the purpose of these actions is to allow the physician performing a final physical

examination of both a contestant and a wrestler before a contest to determine whether a contestant's or a wrestler's systolic pressure and diastolic pressure is within acceptable limits.

The regulatory amendment to COMAR 09.14.04.10 seeks to expand the medical reasons for the imposition of an indefinite medical suspension by the physician examining a contestant after a contest. The Commission maintains that, after considering all relevant medical factors relating to the contestant, the physician evaluating a contestant's blood pressure is best suited to determine whether a contestant should engage in a contest. The Commission maintains that the physician examining a contestant after a contest should be allowed to impose an indefinite medical suspension for any medical reason that the physician deems appropriate.

The regulatory amendment to COMAR 09.14.06.10 seeks to change the ruling for the implementation of the low-blow foul in a boxing contest when a contestant is unable to continue from being ruled a draw to being ruled a no contest. The senior physician for the Commission has determined that it is not possible to medically diagnose an injury sustained by a contestant who received a low-blow. Because a draw ruling or a technical knockout loss ruling for the contestant sustaining a low-blow foul could be beneficial to one contestant while being opposed by the other contestant, the Commission has concluded that the appropriate ruling is a no contest.

**COMMISSION POSITION/VOTE ON CHANGES  
TO THE ASSOCIATION OF BOXING COMMISSIONS'  
RECOMMENDED "2017 UNIFIED RULES OF MMA"**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report in regard to changes to the recommended "2017 Unified Rules of MMA" which were approved collectively, and via voice vote, by the Association of Boxing Commissions (ABC) at the annual ABC Conference held in August of 2016 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Two of the approved rule changes have been opposed from a medical standpoint by members of the medical community from whom the Commission seeks medical

guidance. First, the definition of a grounded fighter has been changed in reference “Kneeing and/or Kicking the head of a grounded opponent”; assertions have been made that the rule change will make it more likely that grounded MMA contestants can be legally kneed, and kicked, in the head. Secondly, heel kicks to the kidney are no longer prohibited.

Dr. John W. Stiller, M.D., Commission Chief Physician, has stated his medical opinion opposing these two rule changes out of concerns for fighter safety. Dr. Stiller recommended that the Commission not approve such changes in the State of Maryland until, and unless, credible and accepted medical studies have been conducted confirming that these respective rule changes would not adversely affect the health and safety of competing MMA contestants.

The Commission expressed a strong concern about any and all strikes to the kidney in all combative sports regulated by the Commission, noting that punches to the kidney are prohibited in boxing. Chairman Dansicker and Commissioner Malone both inquired as to why a punch to the kidney is acceptable in boxing but not in MMA, opining that regulations should be consistent from one combative sport to the other. The Commission instructed Executive Director Pannella to pose this question to representatives of the medical community involved in combative sports and to report his findings to the Commission.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Malone, seconded by Commissioner Moore, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) not to adopt the recommended “2017 Unified Rules of MMA” which were approved collectively by the ABC at its 2016 Conference. The Commission instructed Mr. Pannella to prepare written correspondence to send to the ABC, explaining: (1) the Commission’s position for the reasons noted; and (2) stating that the Commission will not consider reversing its decision until, and unless, credible and accepted medical studies have been conducted confirming that these referenced rule changes would not adversely affect the health and safety of competing MMA contestants.

### **PROFESSIONAL BOXER SAMER BARAKAT**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report.

The Commission took the following actions in regard to professional boxer Samer Baraket, who was licensed as a boxer in the State of Maryland from July 8, 2015 until July 8, 2016: (1) The Commission imposed an indefinite medical suspension on Mr. Barakat after he sustained an atypical head injury from being knocked out during his boxing contest against Travis Reeves on July 9, 2015 in Parkville, Maryland which required hospital transport; (2) The Commission lifted its indefinite medical suspension of Mr. Barakat on December 22, 2016 as Mr. Barakat had complied with the medical requirements of his suspension; and (3) The Commission will not consider granting a boxer license to Mr. Barakat to compete in a boxing contest in the State of Maryland until, and unless, a hearing is held to consider both the nature of Mr. Barakat's knockout and the doctors' clinical medical observations during the time of his unconsciousness and upon his waking to determine if Mr. Barakat is at a heightened risk of potential neurological injury. Mr. Pannella noted that these actions have been forwarded for documentation purposes to the two certified boxing registries affiliated with the Association of Boxing Commissions -- Fight Fax, Inc. and BoxRec.

### **SHAWSTYLE PRODUCTIONS, LLC**

Executive Director Pannella reported that Shawstyle Productions, LLC is in arrears for certain bills pertaining to Commission-sanctioned professional boxing events promoted by Shawstyle Productions, LLC and held on May 14, 2016 and on November 12, 2016, respectively. Mr. Pannella stated that the Commission is currently investigating this matter.

### **COMMISSION AMATEUR MMA REGULATIONS**

Executive Director Pannella reported that final changes are currently being made to the proposed amateur MMA regulations, which he expects to be submitted to the Commission for consideration and approval in the early part of 2017.

### **COMMISSION WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE SENT TO WILLIAM "BILL" ROSBERG**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report.

Responding to a Commission directive, Mr. Pannella prepared and sent written correspondence via e-mail on December 5, 2016 to William “Bill” Rosberg, General Manager of the MGM Grand National Harbor located in Oxon Hill, Maryland. In the written correspondence, Mr. Rosberg was advised that Chairman Dansicker and Mr. Pannella would be available to meet with either Mr. Rosberg or a representative of Mr. Rosberg’s staff to discuss the possibility of Commission-sanctioned events being held at MGM Grand National Harbor and the Commission’s regulatory role and contributions in this regard.

**COMMISSION INVESTIGATION:  
SCHEDULED “MICRO CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING” EVENT**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report.

The Commission received a complaint with less than 24 hours notice which led to the Executive Director conducting an investigation into an illegal, unsanctioned wrestling event scheduled to occur on December 17, 2016 at The New Del Mar Inn in Hagerstown. The wrestling event was being promoted as “Micro Championship Wrestling”. Upon being advised of Commission regulations and the actions of the wrestling organization involved in attempting to hold similar unsanctioned events at other venues in Maryland, the owner of this establishment fully cooperated with the Commission. While the Commission took several steps to assist the owner in preparing for the event to be regulated by the Commission, the event ultimately was cancelled by the owner due to the fact that the ceiling of the establishment was too low to accommodate the size of the wrestling ring. The Commission did establish working ties with the owner, and is planning to meet with him to discuss the possibility of holding wrestling events and combative sports events outdoors on the grounds of this establishment in the future.

**SCHEDULED COMMISSION MEETINGS**

The Commission held a discussion regarding Commission meetings scheduled to be held in the first part of Calendar Year 2017. The Commission agreed to hold the following three meetings on the following dates and times in the Third Floor Conference Room, 500 North Calvert Street, in Baltimore, Maryland:

Wednesday, January 25, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.;  
Wednesday, February 22, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.; and  
Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at 2:00 p.m..

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon a motion by Chairman Dansicker, and seconded by Commissioner Malone, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the meeting at 3:38 p.m..

**Patrick Pannella**  
**Executive Director**