# ZONE DIRECTORS' COUNCIL

## APPROVED Meeting Minutes

February 1, 2026
7:00 p.m. ET / 4:00 p.m. PT
Zoom

### 1. Approval of Agenda

The meeting was called to order with representation confirmed from all four Zones.

A request was made to add Four Zone Updates as New Business Item 7.c. The purpose of the addition was to provide an opportunity for Zone updates and discuss transitioning to written Zone reports for future meetings.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried without opposition.

### 2. Conflict of Interest Statement

The Council reviewed the USA Swimming Conflict of Interest Statement. Members were reminded of their responsibility to disclose any real, potential, or perceived conflicts and to refrain from participating in related discussions or votes.

No conflicts of interest related to the meeting agenda were disclosed.

### 3. Approval of Minutes

The October and November meeting minutes were presented for approval. The October minutes had previously been deferred because they were received immediately prior to the November meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the October and November minutes. Motion carried without opposition.

### 4. Organizational Announcements/Updates

Melissa Hellervik-Bing reported that the qualifying standards for Open Water Junior Nationals had been adjusted and the updated meet announcement had been posted. Zone representatives were asked to communicate the changes to their teams. Additional discussion is anticipated regarding the role of Zone Open Water Championships as a pathway to Junior Nationals.

TJ Walsh introduced Harper Freeman as the new Eastern Zone Junior Athlete Representative. Harper will serve the remainder of the term following Nicole Zhang's resignation.

### 5. Annual USA Swimming Committee Orientation

Joel Shinofield conducted the annual USA Swimming committee orientation and introduced Terry Jones as the new USA Swimming staff liaison to the ZDC.

Members were reminded that they must remain USA Swimming members in good standing and maintain all applicable requirements, including Athlete Protection Training, background checks, and any certifications required for their positions.

Joel emphasized the importance of attendance and asked members who cannot attend a meeting to notify the Council chairs. Members were also reminded that Junior Athlete Representatives participate in Council discussions but are non-voting members.

## 6. Old Business

### a. ZDC Role for Summit Planning

The Council revisited how the ZDC can support planning for the USA Swimming Summit. Joel reported that he had discussed the Council's involvement with staff leading the event and indicated that ZDC participation would be particularly valuable in developing curriculum and educational tracks and ensuring appropriate time for committee and Zone meetings.

The Summit schedule will include a full day on Thursday. Joel recommended involving the entire ZDC in the initial curriculum and programming discussion because of the range of constituent groups represented on the Council.

The Council agreed to make Summit programming a significant focus of its next meeting, with the possibility of creating smaller working groups afterward if needed.

### b. December Board of Directors Meeting

Members who attended the December Board of Directors meeting shared observations with the Council. The ZDC's presence at Board meetings was viewed as valuable for maintaining awareness of Board activities and identifying information that may be relevant to the Zones.

Members also noted improvements in the structure and efficiency of the Board meeting and the opportunity for the Council to continue learning through attendance.

### c. USA Swimming Survey of LSC Leaders

Joel confirmed that the USA Swimming survey results had been published and reported that additional Pulse Surveys had recently been completed. Reports addressing LSC issues, coaches in their first five years, and other feedback were expected to be distributed to the Council.

Joel explained that IntelliSport's research process uses findings from each survey to develop increasingly focused follow-up questions and Pulse Surveys, with the resulting reports published to the membership.

Discussion followed regarding whether the ZDC should identify one or more issues from the research for future Council projects. Recurring issues identified through the research include membership growth, facilities, coach retention and training, and finances, with volunteerism also identified as an ongoing challenge.

The Council discussed facility utilization, the burden placed on clubs that repeatedly host meets, volunteer burnout, and whether meet operations have become unnecessarily complex. Potential opportunities include identifying underutilized facilities, expanding the number of clubs capable of hosting meets, and examining ways to reduce the volunteer burden.

The Council will continue reviewing the survey findings to identify potential areas where the ZDC can contribute.

## 7. New Business

### a. January Board of Directors Meeting

Members who attended the January Board of Directors meeting provided an update. Topics discussed by the Board included athlete support and preparation for 2028 and beyond, the Short Course World Championship Trials, Board election procedures, membership growth, year-end financial performance, and revisions to the Board Governance Policy Manual.

Members also reported discussion regarding the USA Swimming mobile application and use of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center by international athletes. Joel clarified that decisions regarding international athlete access to the Training Center are made by the USOPC rather than USA Swimming.

Joel also described increased preparation and communication between staff and Board members in advance of meetings, which has contributed to shorter and more focused Board meetings.

### b. Beta Test Group - Mobile App

The Council reviewed the response to USA Swimming's request for participants in the Mobile App Beta Testing Group. Each Zone had communicated the opportunity to its LSCs, resulting in strong participation.

The effort was cited as an example of the ZDC fulfilling its role as a connector between USA Swimming headquarters and LSCs.

Joel thanked the Council for quickly generating a large testing cohort and noted that the participation will allow USA Swimming to beta test software before release.

The beta test is scheduled to launch February 16 and run for four weeks. Individuals who completed the beta-test signup process were confirmed as selected participants.

### c. Four Zone Updates

Tris Formon introduced a proposed written Zone-report format and shared a Southern Zone report as an example. The goal is to allow members to review routine information in advance and reserve meeting time for questions, discussion, problem-solving, and sharing practices among Zones.

The Southern Zone reported work related to its Senior Zone meet, Age Group Zone team selection procedures, DEI participation, and Open Water development. The Southern Zone Senior meet will be opened to teams outside the Zone, subject to an athlete cap.

The Central Zone reported ongoing planning with hosts of its 14-and-under, Open Water, and diversity meets. Regular meetings with meet hosts have begun earlier in the planning cycle and have been well received. Updates were also provided regarding the Central/Western Athlete Summit, including programming, transportation, budgeting, sponsorships, and a $1,000 athlete-project grant.

The Western Zone discussed challenges resulting from the loss of its original Spring Sectional meet facility and the subsequent effects of relocating the meet and modifying qualifying standards. The experience prompted discussion regarding communication among Sections, Zones, meet hosts, and USA Swimming when significant changes affect multiple competitions. The possibility of revisiting guidance or a communications resource for Sectional committees was discussed.

Additional discussion addressed increasing LSC support for Open Water programming and opportunities for Zones to share effective practices.

The Council also recognized the passing of former Central Zone Director Paul Thompson and acknowledged his contributions to the sport.

Terry Jones provided an update on planning for the Athlete Summit at Emory University in June, noting that both athlete and non-athlete programming tracks are being developed.

The Council supported continuing the Zone-update concept, with an emphasis on written reports supplemented by meeting discussion when collaboration or Council input would be beneficial.

## 8. Adjournment

The Council discussed scheduling its March meeting. Because of conflicts with championship meets throughout March, no date was finalized. A Doodle poll will be distributed to determine the next meeting date.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn. Motion carried without opposition.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:58 p.m. ET.