

IAA/IASRA Meeting, 5th August 2009

Location: West County Hotel, Chapelizod

Present: Declan Duffy (IASRA), Mariel O'Keeffe (IASRA), Dave O'Connor (IAA), Stephen Fay (IAA), Aidan Quinlivan (IAA)

Agenda:

- Chamber of Commerce Progress Report
- IASRA Individual Membership and Affiliates.
- Slandering of IASRA by IAA members.
- Comments made by Evelyn on resignation and decision-making within IASRA.
- Timelines for moving forward.

Meeting begins 19:50

Proceedings:

It is agreed that the audio recording will not be published.

IAA ask for a copy of current charter. IASRA have a charter, which is "full of holes" according to them. IAA explain that charter is presented as a working document with the blanks to be filled in, a framework. Stephen Fay of IAA explains previous process whereby he drafted a framework which was to be worked on.

IASRA Acknowledge that the charter needs to be done by businesses. IAA explains additional aspects of what was agreed at the meeting on February 11th 2009. IASRA individual members need to remain represented. Some time is taken to explain the process agreed in February.

IASRA say that a consensus has to be reached with all their members. Declan suggests that both the IASRA and IAA constitutions could be merged. It is pointed out that the IAA and IASRA agreed that IAA constitution would not be changed in February. IASRA committee have not read the IAA constitution.

IASRA re-iterate that they have members who would not join the IAA, and IAA will have to ask IASRA members themselves why they did not join the IAA.

IAA point out that 650 people have joined IASRA since February, ask for examples of why people have not just joined the IAA. IASRA respond, lot of it has to do with history, people there from the start, people who were unimpressed with IAA EGM of 2008. It was pointed out that only 30 or so people were at this meeting. IAA again ask why these 600 people joined. IAA wish to find out where 900 people who do not like the IAA came from.

Other reasons would include that IAA have concentrated too much on legal issues, bills, and not individual players. IAA points out several instances where IAA have acted on behalf of players with Gardai and Customs, but the Bill was paramount.

IASRA state that they joined at a critical point, and had to bring their suggestions from standards. IASRA also say that the large increase in members has been from the Filipino community and FRAG. The majority of IASRA membership is from the Filipino community, with 650+ being from FRAG joining as a body.

IASRA say that IAA have not fully engaged with Filipino community, IAA point out that they were at Filipino consulate meeting with affiliates, have asked Filipino community for help in translating documentation, etc.

IASRA ask about agreements on recruitment in February meeting. IAA detail two agreements: One, that IASRA had individual members that would not join the IAA and needed representation. Two, that additional IASRA members after this would be represented by the IAA, with IASRA as a fallback.

IAA point out that a large recruiting drive from IASRA was basically signing people up to be represented by the IAA, without signing up to a code of conduct, or contributing to running costs. Even with the best of intentions on IASRA's part, there will be rivalry built up just by being in another, alternative organisation. These are 900 people who have signed up to not join the IAA, and this was not in the spirit of the agreement.

IASRA claim to not know about any agreement about representation, it is pointed out from the February minutes that individual membership is retained for "existing membership". IASRA claim not to have actively recruited, and that individuals have specifically come to them off their own bat.

The issue of IAA reps being at IASRA meetings and vice versa is brought up. The current IASRA committee were not aware that the IAA committee were specifically told by Alan Concannon to stay away from the IASRA EGM in May.

IASRA committee express dismay at not being told a lot of things to do with the previous running of IASRA. They were only given the constitution at the EGM.

IASRA had to run with the constitution as given them at the EGM, since they were already in talks with DoJ. There are definitely parts they want to change. IASRA/IAA agree that IASRA members need to agree to the plan.

IASRA agree they were not formed because of disenfranchised players, they were formed because MIA wanted someone to represent them. The discussion of members only came up when Derek Talbot was approached by members asking for representation.

IASRA have been in contact with DoJ, general enquiries on going overseas, have brought in an equality officer, and have been looking at membership cards.

IAA asks if IASRA wish to follow the plan to become a Chamber of Commerce. IASRA respond that they must ballot their members.

IAA explain that if a Chamber of Commerce is set up, it will not have ordinary members, there will be a player rep on committee, but non-commercial people will not have standing to vote, etc.

IASRA wish to gain consensus; if they go ahead without gaining majority, there is nothing stopping IASRA members from forming a third organisation. Will need to be a 3/4 majority legally. IASRA also agree they must ask their members why they have joined IASRA rather than the IAA.

IAA re-iterates that they do not understand why people have joined another organisation. Point at their news post, massive work they have put in in July alone. All they have heard so far is that there are 900 people who do not want to join IAA, but not specifically why.

IASRA state that they don't want to misquote anyone on why they don't want to join IAA.

IAA advise IASRA committee that the IASRA committee have been seen to pass on rumours propagated by previous IASRA committee. These include the assertion that the IAA committee took a month to respond to IASRA, that Stephen Fay worked on the constitution posted on the IASRA website etc. The IASRA committee are opening themselves up to legal issues by writing these rumours down, when they cannot be verified.

IAA also ask about IASRA EGM Attendees, and the assertion that IASRA affiliates who had since affiliated to the IAA were not invited to the IASRA EGM. These members contacted the IAA asking why they had not been invited. IASRA claim this was a practice of the previous committee, and that they had not known about it.

IAA ask why an IASRA EGM was called. IASRA committee don't know. Roughly 30 people attended. At the time, there were 350-400 members of IASRA, which would have made the meeting inquorate. IASRA respond that the head of FRAG was in attendance, with a casting vote for all FRAG members.

IASRA say that they do not like their current document, and that they have been putting up with 'personal slander'. IAA ask for examples. IASRA ask that discussion be moved to end of meeting. The agenda is revisited.

Chamber of Commerce project report - "Nothing done on it". New IASRA committee only received the draft of the template from old committee last month.

IAA gives a progress report on charter. IAA called a meeting of all affiliates to talk about charters of chambers of commerce. IAA had to convince its affiliates to be onboard with the Chamber of Commerce. IAA have affiliates on board, and have their feedback on what they want in a commercial representative body, and came up with a working model of how the transition period could work. The framework was done in May, and is waiting for IASRA response. Framework was sent to the previous IASRA committee in May. Printouts of the framework documents, timeline, and diagram of the transitional period are handed over, current IASRA committee had not been given these by previous committee. Old constitution was all the new committee were given.

IASRA committee acknowledge that they have been landed in hot water with their appointment. IAA ask if the committee themselves are committed to the plan. IASRA acknowledge that Chamber of Commerce is a good idea, but it has to be put to the members. Will have to take a different angle if a 'no' vote is given.

IASRA note that previous IAA/IASRA meeting appeared to be an argument, from the minutes. IAA points out those minutes are very dry, not necessarily reflecting on the tone of the meeting. It is agreed that the audio recording of the February meeting will be forwarded to the IASRA committee.

IASRA are concerned at having to 'sell' the IAA to their members, some are very staunchly anti-IAA. IAA offer to meet with anyone who has issues with them, are very keen to get any specific feedback they can.

IAA bring up the issue of IASRA individual members possibly not being fully aware they are joining IASRA, or being made aware of the situation or the existence of the IAA. IASRA agree that not all members would have been fully aware of what they were signing up to. IAA state that this is not a numbers game, and if IAA membership was free and required no ID or photo, IAA would have over 900 members overnight. IASRA state that it was not the intention to aggressively recruit.

IAA accept that IASRA has some members that do need re-assurance and representation, however state that they do not accept that the fact that IASRA has over 900 members is significant, since membership is free, no ID is given, no code of conduct is signed, no affirmation appears on the form.

IAA report that a committee member has visited an IASRA affiliated retailer, and saw people being required to sign the form.

IASRA claim that aggressive membership drives all happened before they were a committee, and they are on track for the Chamber of Commerce plan.

IAA produces the IASRA 'mission statement', which was produced by the current committee recently, and contains the phrase 'as an individual' several times. IAA assert that this does not look like the mission statement of an organisation that wishes its members to be represented by the IAA and is working to form a Chamber of Commerce, it seemed to be a very pointed statement. Mission Statement is completely at odds with previous plan and commitment made with previous committee.

IASRA committee says they had no idea there was any plan or commitment with previous committee. IAA hand over copy of joint IAA/IASRA statement issued after February meeting. IASRA committee ask for copy of statement, it is pointed out that it has been public for 4 months. IASRA committee have not read the statement.

IASRA state they have not been given a lot of information by the previous committee, and they now have to go back and reconsider a lot of things that have been done. A code of conduct should be added.

IAA state that IASRA are seven months into existence, and 5 months into a period where this agreement has been in place. IAA have so far considered being both an IAA and IASRA affiliate to not be a conflict of interest, for the sole reason that IASRA were moving in the right direction. IASRA have continued to be a standing alternative to the IAA, and the period of status quo is coming to an end.

IAA asks if there is a code of conduct for sites/retailers. There is currently no code of conduct for individuals, sites or retailers.

IASRA state that people have signed up for representation, such as being helped with confiscation of kit. IAA state that they are contacted by people several times a week to do with confiscation, they are never asked for an IAA card.

The IAA state that their mandate is to every airsofter in the country. They do not differentiate between members and non-members in who they help, and have even given assistance to people living in mainland UK.

The IAA do not accept that people can say they do not have representation from the IAA. The IAA works in the interests of the sport.

Meeting is moved on to alleged slandering of IASRA by IAA members.

IASRA point out a claim by an IAA member that they had 'failed' in what they had tried to do. IAA point out that in order for accusations or talk to be slander, it has to be provably false.

IASRA point back to an agreement between IAA/IASRA at February meeting that there would be no more rumours/bickering between the organisations' members. IAA point out that they have seen quite a bit of sarcasm and unconstructiveness in discussions, but that they have also seen very valid questions being asked.

IAA point out that IASRA responses to questions have been along the same pattern as previous committees, that IASRA will refuse to answer questions and claim that heated discussion is 'damaging the sport' or will disavow themselves from answering. IAA Chair points out that he has taken personal abuse at venues and events due to his status, but he has always had the answers for people who ask him questions, no matter how unconstructive. IASRA are familiar with the amount of abuse the IAA have received.

IASRA points out problems with boards.ie, and that boards.ie may close down the Airsoft forum if enough heated debate goes on. The IAA rejects this, and points out the mechanics of the recent related High Court judgement.

IASRA have been in contact with owners of boards (DeVore) about locking the IASRA constitution thread, since Airsoft moderators would not. Have also been in contact asking for an IASRA news thread.

IAA/IASRA agree that discussion is good, and will happen somewhere.

Agenda is moved on to "comments made by Evelyn, and decision-making within IASRA", with the proviso that there is a big difference between disagreement and slander.

IASRA committee were very surprised at Evelyn's resignation.

IAA ask what involvement Derek Talbot has with IASRA. IASRA respond that Derek was involved only up until the Bill was passed, and now has nothing to do with IASRA.

IASRA state that there was no point in them dealing with the Bill where Mr. Talbot was already involved.

IASRA state that they were only given the constitution of IASRA 3 weeks before this meeting, after the AGM. They attended, were elected without having read the constitution.

IAA bring up a report from an IAA affiliate that IASRA had approached them the day after the IASRA EGM in order to join. IASRA deny this, they were talking to this affiliate the day after, but did not approach them about leaving the IAA.

IAA re-iterate that they have been recognised as the national governing body for the sport, and that they are responsible for proving to the authorities that a system of self-governance by the community is the only way forward.

IASRA state that they have never claimed to be the governing body for the sport, only a representative body for their members.

IAA tell IASRA about an incident that happened after the February meeting. IAA applied to the Federation of Irish Sports (FIS) for recognition as a sport, i.e. Sports Council recognition, which would open up the possibility of capitalisation grants. IAA Chair spent several days writing up documentation.

At FIS AGM, Airsoft's standing as an official sport was NOT ratified; FIS were given information that the IAA was not a governing body for Airsoft prior to their AGM.

Airsoft's recognition as a sport was blocked due to this. FIS and the Sports Council are not interested in sports with two governing bodies, and this completely blocks Airsoft's progression as an officially recognised sport.

FIS only agreed to progress with the recognition of Airsoft on the understanding that there would be one governing and representative body. IAA will be recognised in September, however sports funding may not be available until 2012

IAA state that this is a large reason why IASRA is facing such hostility. IASRA is directly responsible for Airsoft not being recognised as a sport in Ireland.

IASRA state that they have not heard this. IAA state that they have had to keep secret a lot of their operations with government departments and Garda departments, as if departments are named in meeting minutes etc., these departments get contacted and told to ignore the IAA, that IAA are not a recognised body.

IAA asserts that they represent all Airsofters, and that this is not a recruitment competition. IASRA again assert that they have not been actively recruiting, that people come to them. IASRA state that a lot of their members are signing up without a full appreciation of the facts.

Some more discussion of boards. ie. IASRA are asking DeVore for an IASRA news thread. IAA ask why IASRA need to be in contact with the owner of boards to open a thread. Airsoft board mods were not responding to requests for a sticky thread.

Agenda moved on to "timelines for moving forward"

IAA state that IASRA now have all the info required, the full story. There needs to be progress seen.

IAA mention the IASRA EGM as an example of not moving forward. Emails were read out from IAA there, and other things said. IAA was told they were not welcome there, and the minutes are being kept secret. IASRA committee were unaware that IAA was told to stay away.

IASRA state that they will send the minutes to IAA. IAA ask that IASRA post their committee meeting minutes online, IASRA state they are in the process of doing so. IASRA state that Evelyn still has a lot of the documentation.

IAA states that progress needs to be made quickly. IAA came out of the meeting in February with high hopes, met with all affiliates to gather feedback, just for IASRA, drafted up the charter and saw nothing. There needs to be a massive gesture and show of progress.

IAA asks that IASRA cease recruitment of individual members, and send individual members who come to them to the IAA.

IASRA note that they have signed up FRAG as a body, and are still receiving membership forms in batches from them. IAA ask that they no longer accept individual members there, they are individual members in their own right, there is nothing in either constitution about recruiting teams.

IAA state that IASRA have just learned that recruiting large amounts of members is not in the spirit of the agreement made in February.

IAA offers its full support in moving this forward, IAA is available to offer assistance, reassurance, and present themselves at any events or gatherings.

IAA asks that a unified front be presented to the DoJ in future dealings, this needs to be done.

IASRA chair and vice-chair express concerns over communications made by representatives of the DoJ, with regard to if there would be changes to the MPB.

IAA state that they have had recommendations taken on board; legislation on brandishing is almost an exact copy of the suggestion made by Stephen Fay in October 2008.

IASRA state a preference for having a public representative, such as Pat Rabbitte or Aengus O'Snodaigh in future meetings with DoJ. IAA also mentions Charles Flanagan as a sympathetic public representative.

IASRA express concerns about recommendations being taken onboard by DoJ, and concerns about previous communications.

Meeting called to order by IAA chair, discussion is moved on.

IAA re-iterates that IASRA individual membership ceases, and that more information is passed around about DoJ contacts. IAA/IASRA committee exchange phone numbers.

Latest communications from DoJ are discussed; IAA talk about their dealings in making sure licensing system was not inadvertently enacted before preparation.

IAA asks who was consulted on proposals for retailer standards as submitted by IASRA. IASRA consulted all their affiliates before sending their recommendations to the DoJ.

IAA Chair re-iterates that progress needs to be seen very soon, i.e. within 2 weeks. Next draft of Chamber of Commerce should be available then. Things need to start moving much, much faster.

A joint statement is suggested. IAA Chair believes that it's now up to IASRA committee to make a statement and push the plan forward.

IAA states that IASRA is currently set up as a rival Airsoft Association, and in the absence of progress, there needs to be a line drawn. The community is expecting a lot of IASRA, and the onus is on them to deliver.

IAA offers to make themselves available to IASRA members for any questions.

IAA hands over hard copy of July update, asks that IASRA members be made aware of this work that is being done. IASRA agrees, and agrees that one body is more constructive when it comes to the Sports Council.

IAA Vice-chair points out that he is in meetings with county councils to do with planning for a site. Things would be greatly simplified in terms of planning if Airsoft was recognised as a sport, which it is currently is not.

IASRA committee acknowledge that they now understand the amount of work involved. A parallel is drawn between IASRA now and the IAA in January.

IAA states that they need assurances, but also action. Without this, there will come a point in the near future where the IAA will consider the Chamber of Commerce idea abandoned, and will progress without IASRA. IAA states that they want IASRA to succeed in the Chamber of Commerce plan.

IAA state that they have had to work with IASRA despite calls from their members not to work with IASRA. They are making a great concession to IASRA in this regard.

IASRA state that their main issue is presenting this plan to the members.

IAA states that there needs to be very visible progress in the very near future.

IASRA state a concern that the strain of additional members from IASRA may put too much strain on the IAA. The IAA states that most of the work it does is for non-members and a lot of the people defending the IAA or disagreeing with IASRA on boards and elsewhere are not IAA members. Most of the suggestions and feedback the IAA get is from non-members.

IAA brings up the fear that a lot of what IASRA is doing is duplicated work. IASRA have discussed printing membership cards, IAA asks why they are focusing effort on this, and not the Chamber of Commerce plan. IASRA have only gone to the stage of costing and discussion.

IAA point out that there is no issue with IASRA members having no voice, they are free to join the IAA and have full rights for voting.

IAA point out that they need to be able to put across to the people who matter that they are not the 'bad guys'. IASRA agree.

IASRA state that they will put out a statement in the next 2-3 days with this plan, and also a public forum and request for IASRA members to come out and state their issues with the IAA.

IASRA committee genuinely believe that having one voice is preferable.

IAA states again that there needs to be a vast speedup in the rate of progress on the plan. Right now, the reasons for cutting ties are vastly stronger than those for progressing, and this is a last chance. IAA have been told by affiliates to cut ties.

IASRA state that there needs to be great care taken, in case IASRA members are unconvinced and could turn on the committee, or form a third body.

IASRA ask for suggestions on how to improve their profile. IAA chair suggests being allot more open and honest about what they are doing. IASRA claim everything they have done is on their website.

IASRA proposes that they talk to teams one at a time to build their confidence in the IAA.

IASRA chair mentions a FRAG event this weekend where the teams for Take AIM are being selected. Will talk to FRAG at that event. IAA Vice-chair offers to accompany IASRA to the event and take questions and feedback. IASRA offers to speak to FRAG about IAA representative being at the event.

IASRA bring up the fact that the Filipino community and FRAG have had a lot of trouble with accusations of hot guns, cheating, etc. The IAA condemns this as racism, and agrees it is a problem. The IAA describes its interactions with the Filipino community, asking the Filipino community about translations, and mentioning FRAG in the recent Gazette piece. A number of Filipino community members have given up the sport because of accusations and prejudice.

Discussion is made of setting up lines of communication. IAA agree to set up a private forum and chatroom to keep in touch.

Documentation is handed over in both directions.

Meeting ends 22:05