

## Memo

**To:** USATF Association Presidents, Zonal Reps and USATF Committee Chairs

**From:** USATF Board of Directors

**Date:** February 7, 2015

**Subject:** USATF IAAF Council nominee



The selection of USATF's nominee for the IAAF Council has continued to be discussed, with letters sent from five Associations and the AAC to the USATF Board.

It is clear in the discussions that have taken place, and in correspondence that has been received, that a full vetting of the rules, circumstances and considerations of the board throughout the entire process has not been properly heard or discussed. In this memo we as a board will provide as much detail as possible to illustrate why we made the selection that we did, and under what authority we made that decision.

For all IAAF position nominees, USATF's constituent-constituted Nomination and Governance Panel accepts applications and then presents final candidates for consideration. Prior to the Closing Session, the board vetted the final candidates presented by the NGP and made the selection.

At the Closing General Session of the 2014 USATF Annual Meeting, conducted by USATF's Organizational Services Committee, emergency legislation was proposed to change the selection process of USATF's IAAF Council nominee. That proposal called for the voting delegates present to **recommend** a candidate to the board. The legislation gave the board the full authority to make the final and official nomination, including choosing a different candidate.

In a widely circulated memo in November, the author of the legislation indicated the purpose of the legislation was to ensure Bob Hersh's re-nomination as USATF's IAAF Council candidate. After USATF delegates present at the Closing Session voted to approve the emergency legislation, they then entertained the two nominees selected by USATF's Nominating and Governance Panel, Bob Hersh and Stephanie Hightower. They then voted to recommend Bob Hersh to the USATF Board as USATF's candidate for IAAF Council.

The regularly scheduled board meeting following the Closing Session had on its agenda the selection of all IAAF nominee positions, with presentations to be made by each candidate. (This process has been in place since 2008.) Mr. Hersh and Ms. Hightower both made presentations in a closed board session and were questioned actively by the board about their qualifications, vision, and how they would represent USATF at the IAAF table.

The board then went into deliberations to make a final selection. On the IAAF Council position, the key elements of the conversation included:

- The direction the IAAF is headed with new leadership. Announced IAAF presidential candidates Sebastian Coe and Sergey Bubka both are contemporaries of Stephanie Hightower and she enjoys especially good relationships with them, making her a very strong candidate
- The strength of Ms. Hightower's relationships throughout the IAAF, and especially among women and federations in the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East, make her a very strong candidate
- The fact that the IAAF has a demonstrable need for more women and women of color makes her a very strong candidate
- The fact that she has a strong track record of advocacy for USATF and our athletes at the international level makes her a very strong candidate

But the biggest issue discussed was the current state and future direction of the IAAF and its leadership, and it is the topic on which we must speak most strongly in this memo. It is the decisive reason why we chose Stephanie Hightower as the best candidate.

Mr. Hersh was elevated to the IAAF Council in 1999, the year of Lamine Diack's ascendancy to the Presidency after the death of Primo Nebiolo. Mr. Hersh's elevation was part of the political shift that took place as part of a new era of IAAF leadership. That shift included changes in the IAAF's top executives as well as the fundamental power structure of the organization.

Mr. Hersh was elected as one of four IAAF vice presidents in 2011, and was at that time selected by Mr. Diack as Senior Vice President. Retention of either position is not automatic with the seating of the new administration.

The IAAF is under considerable scrutiny at the moment as the handling of doping protocols and charges of corruption related to certain business dealings within the highest level of the organization are currently under investigation. USATF is not a party to those investigations and, like the rest of the world, awaits the outcome of the investigations.

With Mr. Diack leaving office this summer, many others will also be leaving their positions of power or authority, just as had transpired after Mr. Nebiolo's death and Mr. Diack's ascendancy. Regime change at the top brings with it regime change at all levels. At the IAAF, a change in the presidency carries with it huge shifts in political climate and power structure, as well changes in staffing, appointees, voting blocks, elections, policy, rules ... a top-to-bottom change is afoot, on a very broad scale.

Given this climate of monumental political change at the IAAF, and given how closely Mr. Hersh is connected to the tenure and administration of the outgoing presidency, the board believes USATF would compromise the United States' political position at the IAAF if we were to nominate a candidate for Council who is part of that past, outgoing power and leadership structure.

Even though he has served ably since 1999, there is no guarantee of Mr. Hersh's re-election. If USATF were to put him up for election amid all the change cycle, we are more likely to be perceived as backward-looking to the previous administration rather than forward-thinking to the next administration.

Bob has served actively since 1999, but since that time there has not been a specific action at the IAAF that has actively advanced the interests of American athletes or teams. With a new IAAF president about to be elected – and all that goes with it - whatever ability Mr. Hersh may have had to affect positive action at the IAAF for American athletes is gravely mitigated by the new IAAF circumstances and the changes that will happen this summer. We are not saying Mr. Hersh has done anything wrong. We recognize simply that a new leadership structure and IAAF organizational culture – one that Ms. Hightower has close ties to and excellent relationships with – will soon be in place. As result of all the above considerations, Ms. Hightower is the best candidate.

The board had an opportunity to hear from and question both candidates. In our deliberations, we openly discussed the vote on the floor at the Closing Session and took that recommendation very seriously. We also listened to presentations made by these candidates that were markedly different in respect to future advancement of the sport.

We fully understood that our choice of Stephanie Hightower would not be popular among the delegates who voted for Mr. Hersh. We fully understood that our selection was in direct conflict with the recommendation, and that some people would be (and are) very upset by the fact that we didn't simply accept the recommendation. But we also fully understood that our function was to select the best – and not necessarily the most popular – candidate based on everything we know.

The facts we based our decision on were not those that had been discussed – and perhaps not even known – by Annual Meeting attendees in the days leading up to the Closing Session. Mr. Hersh had addressed many committee meetings to present the case for himself as USATF's IAAF Council nominee. It is our understanding that the political changes taking place at the IAAF, and how USATF could most effectively be part of them, were not part of those discussions. Those, however, were the considerations that were the crux of our decision.

As a board, we act as earnestly and deliberately as we can to advance the organization and the sport, with sensitivity to the consideration of all constituents but without being swayed by specific, special interests. That is fundamental to our role as the fiduciary body of USATF.

We believe, for the reasons stated above, that in the best interests of the organization, we selected the best candidate for 2015 and beyond.