

9 USMS R&A Committee Minutes & Meeting Notes 9-20-26, 7:30 PM ET
2026 Recognition & Awards Committee US Masters Swimming

Committee Name: Recognition & Awards	August 16, 2026 Meeting
Committee Chair: Tara Mack "TMack"	Vice Chair: Caitlin Gagnon
Minutes recorded by: TMack & Zoom AI	Meeting Date/Time: 9/20/2026; 7:30pm ET

Actions Taken: [R&A Policy](#) Review and Addendums as applicable

Number of committee members present: 11 Absent: 4 Guests: 0
Committee Members Present: Tara Mack "TMack" (Chair); Caitlin Gagnon (Vice Chair); Rich Burns; Hill Carrow; Sara Dunn; Ann Marshfield; Hayley Martin; Jane Moore; Michael Moore; Beth Nymeyer; Nancy Ridout
Committee Members Absent: Emily Cook; Crystie McGrail (VPLO) Dan Underbrink; Dan Pauling (Ex-Officio)
Guests: N/A

Action items: [R&A Policy](#) Review and Addendums as applicable

*The priority of the R&A committee right now is on the Policies document. Deadline for subcommittees to send their proposed updates/addendums to TMack is Wednesday, Oct 13th. TMack will compile these and send the draft to the committee to review prior to the next meeting which is set for October 18th, 7:30 PM ET.

1 Welcome & Call to order 7:32 pm ET

TMack to take attendance manually, so no need for a formal Role Call.

2 VPLO report (via email) is to note that Oct 7 is the deadline to apply for Committees for 2027. TMack encouraged everyone to continue on R&A and shared her appreciation for the group.

3 Minutes: TMack shared that the Aug 16 minutes were posted and that Jane was the only one who offered feedback. TMack encouraged everyone to give them a read through and even provide her with a simple thumbs' up. Much appreciated.

4 Past business: TMack thanked Caitlin Gagnon for her incredible work on the video and shared that she has received many compliments on it. Hill Carrow's work was also highlighted and many of the DDSA recipients appreciated the creativity and uniqueness of these awards. Nancy Ridout also acknowledged Hill's efforts this year. TMack thanked Nancy R for her thoughtful write up and voiceover and thanked Jeff Commings for his voiceovers for the Kerry O'Brien awards and the efforts from Kerry to get the information to Jeff in a timely manner.

Related to the video, TMack mentioned that the committee should note in the policies document that a separate August meeting should occur for the committee and there would require a

second meeting for the Virtual Meeting that is open to all of the USMS members in August. The committee needs the August meeting to complete bios and voiceovers for the video so there is less scrambling to complete that task within weeks vs having a month or more to complete it as a group effort.

Caitlin Gagnon shared that one Dot Donnelly Winner had a hard time seeing it live, and TMack mentioned she also received that email and sent the winner the direct link. (TMack sent all the winners the link directly the next morning. Hill stated he will send the documented writeups to TMack, Caitlin, and Daniel Pauling for use and references in posting recipients. Caitlin mentioned she uploaded the poetry last year as well.

TMack brought up that under the current and past experiences of keeping some awards as a 'surprise', some of the 2026 recipients will not be included in the 2026 Service Awards video. TMack mentioned that she and Caitlin messaged about this and that Caitlin agreed to create an additional video after Relay/NCC to include the 3 remaining recipients in the RJA, Coach of the year and Club of the year categories. Thank you, Caitlin! (e)

Further discussion occurred regarding keeping certain awards as a surprise and the historical perspective of that practice. Nancy R, Michael M, Rich B, and Hill C all weighed in that there were past conditions that allowed for a surprise- mostly that in the past it was the same large group of people attending and performing the majority of volunteer work and that everyone was traditionally at all of the events together. Beth N mentioned when she was chair that a past committee member told her it was to be kept secret. Nancy pointed out that times have changed and in the modern day it is more impactful to announce the awards altogether and frequently to celebrate recipients more than once. This could also enhance the excitement and engagement of nominations and the awards process. Nancy Ridout: *'The more time and exposure we give to these three awards, the better it is, rather than having it secret and then revealed at a place where not everybody will be anyway.'* It appears to be a unanimous decision by the group to highlight all recipients at the same time. This will also allow for all recipients to be included in the annual service awards video.

It was noted that the policies do not propose or call for surprise reveals and this past method is not logistical and may in fact reduce well deserved acknowledgment and celebration for the volunteers who have worked so hard to receive these awards.

(f) TMack mentioned she wants to have a joint meeting with other committees who may be impacted by this including Coaches Committee and Nancy R suggested to include the chairs and vice chairs as well as the chairs of the subcommittees in this meeting. TMack will propose this meeting opportunity to the chairs and vice chairs of the other committees to occur, ideally, before the end of this year. It was noted that Coach of the Year is not under the R&A purview so this also lends to having multiple committee conversations to ensure each committee has the opportunity to share their ideas and preferences.

b Discussion regarding the R&A Policies included TMack creating a “one sheet” of questions and input into the actual award process. TMack had emailed the national office a list and received a guided response which she will include in the R&A policies and guidelines document for future reference. And that a consistent digital submission process is the preferred method and should continue to be refined. These ideas were suggested by Crystie via email to TMack.

Michael discussed the RJA award and TMack noted that she had received his policy updates draft and thanked him for his hard work. Michael shared that announcement for this award had occurred at Short Course Nationals in the past, this was also because the past deadline for nomination was March 1st annually. Michael also expressed that the LMSC of the recipient can be informed and provide additional opportunities to celebrate the recipients.

Rich Burns also added that we could promote recipients on social media and said that he saw one celebration on Facebook. He mentioned that it could be a series done throughout the year and at the same time promoting the award as the recipient(s).

Ann Marshfield shared her experiences following the Nobel Peace Prize and that this committee could pattern itself after that by announcing recipients and spacing out celebrations for a few months. She suggested that there could be a free membership for certain recipients (like RJA).

Caitlin addressed the social media side and highlighted that leveraging the LMSC coordinators would be a more effective and time efficient way to promote recipients. Caitlin has worked extensively with the USMS media team and their timelines aren't always in line with our committee's goals. She summarized that USMS uses their social media as an outreach vs public relations approach. Caitlin and TMack shared that they each took video screenshots and shared them on their own social media pages tagging the LMSCs of the recipients. This got some good traction and can easily be continued. Beth mentioned to Rich that Caitlin will be making a reel of Rich from Relay footage and it will get traction so be ready.

(c) TMack mentioned that she had an idea of creating a template for recipients that included the USMS swimming logo and the LMSC logo for the recipient and that could be shared directly with LMSCs for ease of posting. Caitlin said she loves this idea. This can eliminate excess work for LMSCs while allowing for more celebration of recipients and provide a more consistent branding model as well.

(d) TMack also suggested that the Awards videos be housed on the USMS Awards page with a Service Awards Videos tile (next to the Ted Haartz Award, for example). This provides a bit of History & Archives and also makes sense to have these videos on the Awards page for ease of members and all to search and locate.

5 New business:

Summary: TMack thanked everyone for being on especially after having the Annual Meeting / HOD this weekend. She shared that the priority of this committee is currently on the R&A Policies (document) and subsequently/concurrently on completing Bios for the 2026 Recipients

and past recipients (checking in with Coaches committee regarding the Kerry O'Brien bios) then on reviewing JotForm to see how that platform functioned for our purposes and what changes to nominations may be appropriate. TMack shared that Hayley has an alternative option for forms in AirTable to be shared at the end of tonight's meeting.

Michael Moore added that for the RJA award, he will ask the nominators: *"Is there any, you know, given the criteria of the Ransom Arthur Award, is there any question we should have asked that you felt that would have better presented your nominee? And, to the people voting: Is there any question we should have asked that would have given you more information about how you would vote for a nominee?"*

TMack mentioned that these questions could be applied to each subcommittee for data collection. Conversation also included only receiving 3 RJA nominations this year versus 9 in the past. Michael thought it could be because people in masters swimming tend to be competitive. He thought maybe that if they had nominated before and not been selected they gave up on it, maybe discouraged or sad.

TMack suggested that the new format may have impacted that particular award as it launched June 1st vs May 1st and was a new method. It would be difficult to know for certain. Efforts to email and contact past nominators could be enhanced and perhaps move the nomination dates to open earlier for more time to collect information for certain awards (like the RJA award). Beth noted that there were 24 nominations for DDSA, so it is difficult to determine factors. TMack reminded the committee that all documentation we receive should stay inside of this committee and is for current committee members only.

The focus returned to the LMSC level and to center in on encouraging folks in leadership roles in their LMSCs to nominate their volunteers and to keep this top of mind by promoting awards multiple times a year. Nancy R suggested having 3 bundled 'highlight' emails each year that could include a testimonial, a celebration, and an invitation to nominate. Also to chat it up at Relay and other events throughout the year. The committee agreed that these (and more) are great suggestions and adding creativity to the mix can boost the process and this committee's goals.

*NOTE: The priority of the R&A committee right now is on the Policies document.

Ann Marshfield asked if she should convert the PDF to a doc and add comments / notes to it for revision? TMack said that would be great and that all of these can be sent to her (TMack) and she will put them into a draft to be distributed and reviewed together to discuss and vote to add addendums or keep parts as they are, etc.

TMack shared that the deadline for subcommittees to send their proposed updates/addendums to TMack is Wednesday, Oct 13th so she can compile them and send the draft to the committee to review prior to the next meeting which is set for October 18th, 7:30 PM ET.

JotForm work will be revisited in November/December as these awards don't get opened until spring 2027. Focus too on a joint meeting as previously discussed. And the bios for the website for 2026 and to include looking at missing bios for past awards.

Additional discussion regarding Old and New business: Some discussion by Nancy as to some of the challenges she experienced with editing the JotForm she filled out as a nominator. TMack mentioned perhaps we need a tutorial or troubleshooting guide. Michael suggested a youtube tutorial video.

Hayley presented AirTable, Caitlin emphasized the effectiveness of AirTable. It can allow for different views and it is easy for the user to fill out the forms in this platform. This is to be continued at a later date and can also be shared at the joint meeting and with the national office for best support of the nomination process and member and committees ease of use.

6 Questions / Comments / Other

Nancy R asked about the possibility of this committee, the Recognition side of it perhaps, could take on the In Memoriam, for example. This was noted by TMack and will be added to upcoming agenda items for discussion. She wasn't sure if there was a list of these still. Sara Dunn posted the list in the chat. <https://www.usms.org/reg/deceased.php> TMack wondered if the R&A website could house some of these items as pertinent. Up for future discussion. Some members discussed that there don't always seem to be answers to questions during annual meetings and that can feel frustrating. This will go onto the next agenda under new business and for further discussion.

TMack also reminded members of the October 7th committee deadline date and encouraged everyone to sign up for this committee again. She has thoroughly enjoyed working with everyone and serving as chair and would like to continue that role as well.

7 Caitlin Gagnon (she/her): I make a motion to adjourn. Nancy Ridout,: Second. Meeting adjourned at 9:39 pm ET

Meeting Summary (from zoom tools)

The meeting focused on reviewing and updating the policies and processes for the USMS recognition and awards committee. The committee discussed the recent awards video, feedback on its success, and the need to ensure all recipients are included in future videos. There was a lengthy conversation about whether major awards should remain secret until presentation, with a consensus forming that more open and early celebration would be beneficial. Members shared historical context for past secrecy and agreed that times have changed, advocating for broader promotion of award winners through social media and LMSC engagement. The group also addressed the need to improve the nomination process, increase nominations, and consider alternative platforms like Airtable for managing submissions. Other topics included the possibility of recognizing members who have passed away, and the need for clearer communication and collaboration with other committees. The conversation ended with a plan to review and revise the policy document in subcommittees.

Virtual Awards Ceremony Video Updates

The committee discussed the recent virtual awards ceremony video, which received positive feedback from attendees. They agreed to create an additional video featuring awards not included in the original presentation, using footage from Relay and NCC events. The group decided to host both videos in the same location to ensure easy access for viewers and the idea of housing all videos on the R&A page through the USMS Website.