

February 26, 2023 AERC Convention Board meeting minutes

President Nick Kohut DVM called the meeting to order at 7:49 a.m. EST

Board members present were Olin Balch DVM, Connie Caudill, Monica Chapman, Jessica Cobbley, Stephanie Palmer-DuRoss, Gunnar Frank, Maureen Fehrs DVM, Susan Garlinghouse DVM, Bridget Helms, Dawn Hilliard, Susan Kasemeyer, Nick Kohut DVM, Bob Marshall DVM, John Parke, Maribel Paulson, Lisa Schneider, Mollie Krumlaw-Smith, Kelly Williams-Stehman, Jan Stevens, Vance Stine, Laurie Underwood, Tim Worden, Eric Rueter and Melissa Ribley DVM. Also present- Executive Director Kathleen Henkel.

Nick Kohut DVM reviewed the agenda. He deferred the trademark discussion until the March meeting. Suggestions from Board members should be sent to Nick Kohut DVM and will be sent to the Governance Group for further discussion.

Connie Caudill made a motion to excuse Mike Maul and Naomi Preston, seconded by Lisa Schneider. Motion passed.

Kathleen Henkel reported on the convention. She stated that attendance seemed to be good with about the same numbers as come when convention is held in Reno. Fifty veterinarians attended the CE classes. She will have the numbers on finances sometime next week.

Motions from the Sanctioning Committee

Connie Caudill presented a motion from the Sanctioning Committee to approve the Young Rider Championship Ride to be held on June 17, 2023, at Wild West Ride in California. This will be a 75-mile ride for Young Riders only. This will be the third year for the Young Riders championship ride. Motion from committee passed unanimously.

Another motion from the Sanctioning Committee requested that the ride calendar be revised to show that the ride to be held at Fun in the Sun on March 2, 2023 is a 55-mile ride (vs a 50-mile ride) in order to make the ride a Pioneer ride. The ride manager has been advertising this ride as a 55-mile ride but inadvertently submitted it as a 50 during sanctioning. The motion corrects the mistake that was made during the sanctioning process. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion regarding Florida Equestrian Heritage Trail Support Letter

Monica Chapman presented a motion from the Trails Committee.

Motion - Florida Equestrian Heritage Trail Support Letter.

AERC will send the following letter on AERC letterhead to North Florida Back Country Horsemen, who will then forward all letters of support from all organizations to the Florida Legislature. The proposed Florida Equestrian Trail would be a legislative designation joining together existing and planned trails to create a system of trails and horse camps that meet criteria for sufficiently accommodating horseback trail riding.

Dear Florida Legislators:

The American Endurance Ride Conference wishes to express its strong support for the designation and promotion of a Florida Equestrian Heritage Trail, a network of trails on

public lands open to equestrians. A designation, associated web page, signage and a system for qualifying for the network can be achieved through a public/non-profit partnership between the state and equestrian trail riding organizations in Florida.

This initiative:

supports the rural economy;
promotes the exploration and appreciation of public lands by equestrians;
provides a resource for residents and visitors to plan their equestrian outings and vacations;
supports the growth in the sport of trail riding, endurance riding and competitive trail riding; and
memorializes the role horses play in Florida's history.

We appreciate your support of this timely and worthwhile initiative.
Sincerely,

Motion from Committee passed unanimously.

Competitions Committee Update

Vance Stine presented the concepts that the Competitions Committee discussed at their convention committee meeting. The Committee decided to be in "observation mode" on the team concept by watching how the regional organizations are doing with their team programs.

Middle distance rides were discussed but the Committee wanted to hear if the Board was in favor of moving forward on this idea. They felt sending a survey to the ride managers could indicate if there was a need for distances of 36-45 miles.

The Committee also discussed if there was a need for Pioneer Limited Distance rides and if Intro rides should be tracked either in the Endurance News or on the website.

Finance Committee Update

Mollie Krumlaw-Smith conducted a discussion concerning AERC finances. The balance sheet shows a net loss of \$82,000, which mostly was a result of valuation of stock positions held by AERC in a bond. The stock was purchased before the current Treasurer was a Board member. The stock has recently been sold and the funds will be invested in CD's. As the other bond investments mature, the funds will be transferred to long-term CD's.

Currently AERC is in good financial shape and has approximately \$800,000 in the savings account, \$540,000 of which is designated as reserve funds. Mollie Krumlaw-Smith suggested that the operating budget needs to be rebalanced if we are going to remain sustainable. She suggested the following items that will help balance the budget.

- Increase membership dues by \$5.00.
- Increase the sanction fees for the first distance sanctioned by \$5.00.
- Reduce costs associated with producing Endurance News. Current printing and mailing runs at an annual loss of \$50,000, which does not include employee compensation. Kathleen Henkel

commented that she has been in negotiations with the current printing company as well as others and they have agreed to reducing the cost of printing by \$1,550- \$2,000 a month. A suggestion was made that AERC look into producing a quarterly printed magazine with monthly versions available online only.

- Reduce open office hours or have a four-day rotating work week where the office still stays open 5 days a week. During convention the hours would be greater.

With these changes the budget would be balanced. In 2 years we will need to dig into our reserves if we do nothing. It is up to the Board to make these decisions.

Discussion by the Board of finances:

- Credit card fees that are charged to AERC amount to \$17,000. Other organizations have started charging a convenience fee for credit card users. If we decided to recapture those fees, an announcement would need to be made with an effective date of something like July 1, 2023 that a 3% surcharge is added to the balance due anytime a credit card is used for payment.
- Mollie Krumlaw-Smith suggested the office get a remote capture deposit machine from our bank so checks can be deposited without leaving the office.
- The Board would like to investigate multiple items to help balance the budget. Mollie Krumlaw-Smith will put a motion together offering 2-3 alternative proposals to balance the budget and bring to the March 13th meeting.

Mollie Krumlaw-Smith was complimented for being proactive and well prepared for the finance presentation.

Kelly Williams-Stehman requested to see the actual cost of producing Endurance News on a monthly basis versus quarterly and biannual production, as well as an actual breakdown of amounts spent in advertising. The Board agreed.

Melissa Ribley DVM suggested we do a survey and ask our members if they want Endurance News in hard copy. The Board agreed.

John Parke moved to defer discussion until Mollie Krumlaw-Smith designs the cost reduction proposal motion. Seconded by Vance Stine. Motion passed unanimously.

Kathleen Henkel proposed an action item for all Directors to go to their local feed/tack stores and get any little horse magazines/newsletters and send her the contact information so that Troy Smith can place ads with endurance information and clinics.

At 9:15 am EST the Strategic Plan groups divided up to discuss their implementation plans. Discussions to include, checking over goals to see if goals are being met, determining the group's focus for the year and planning of group meetings for the upcoming year.

2023 Strategic Plan Groups - group leaders are in *italics*:

Membership - ***Kathleen Henkel***, Tim Worden, Stephanie Palmer-DuRoss, John Parke

Governance - **Nick Kohut**, Kelly Williams Stehman, Lisa Schneider, Connie Caudill, Jan Stevens, Kathleen Henkel

Finance - **Mollie Krumlaw-Smith**, Mike Maul, Vance Stine

Trails - **Monica Chapman, Dawn Hillard**, Maribel Paulson, Jessica Cobbley, Bridget Helms

Horse Welfare - **Melissa Ribley DVM**, Olin Balch DVM, Laurie Underwood, Bob Marshall DVM, Maureen Fehrs DVM

Education - **Naomi Preston**, Susan Garlinghouse, (who led the group in Naomi Preston's absence), Susan Kasemeyer, Gunnar Frank, Eric Rueter

Nick Kohut DVM called the meeting back to order at 10:30 am EST.

Each group leader updated the Board on their discussions.

Finance Group

Most items have been completed. Current goals are to the office and put together a budget that the Board requested.

Trails Group

The larger items have been completed. The current MOU expires in 2025 and they will be reaching out to the BLM to get ahead of a future MOU. The ongoing issues are writing articles, grants and recording volunteer work hours. Sample letter to forest land managers to help keep trails.

Education Group

The most effective education is one on one mentoring to build relationships but it is often hard to find mentors. New riders are overwhelmed with so much information. The Education Group will try to encourage more mentors to take on 1 person and is looking at developing a mentor self-reporting program that will give points for physically escorting a new rider through a ride, earning t-shirt for mentorship points. The award could possibly be financed through a sponsor. The group will work on providing information for new riders in smaller, more palatable portions and work on answering specific questions from new riders.

Horse Welfare Group

Goals include working to develop/refine the plan for investigating equine fatalities and implementation of the existing plan. The group will work on this with the Vet Committee.

Other goals include improving vetting horses with metabolic issues and surveying the Vet Committee regarding same, revamping the vet newsletter, creating a program to recruit new vets, to include development of a Power Point presentation to send to veterinary colleges, and providing support for adequate compensation of vets. Jan Stevens will send the most recent survey responses that came from the ride managers. The group will plan to meet once a month by Zoom.

Governance Group

The Governance Group will continue its monthly meetings. Goals include involving all Board members and giving them time to speak in Board meetings. Nick Kohut DVM will present the committee chairs to the Board for approval in the March meeting. He wants to hear what each committee has discussed in their face-to-face meeting. He will be randomly calling on different Board members each month to ask them what they have been doing to provide the members with more accountability. New Board members

need to plan on attending committee meetings during the convention. The group will continue to reach out to various groups and organizations like the Pony Club, and will get a written transition plan for the Office and IT.

Kathleen Henkel will email Conflict of Interest forms for all Board members to complete.

Connie Caudill updated the Board on the AERC Young Rider international exchange program. Four Young Riders will be riding an endurance ride in Sweden on July 2, 2023. The riders selected are Caroline DeBourbon (California), Cassadee Jaksch (Colorado), Skylar Zortz (Kansas), and Madison Johnston (Virginia).

A brief discussion was held concerning recruiting and keeping junior riders.

Susan Kasemeyer made a motion to adjourn at 11:19 am EST, seconded by Jessica Cobbley. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Connie Caudill