

July 15, 2023 AERC board midyear meeting minutes

President Nick Kohut DVM called the meeting to order at 10:05 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, Eric Rueter, Nick Kohut DVM, Bob Marshall DVM, Mike Maul, Naomi Preston, Melissa Ribley DVM, John Parke, Lisa Schneider, Mollie Krumlaw-Smith, Kelly Williams-Stehman, Jan Stevens, Laurie Underwood and Tim Worden. Also present were Executive Director Kathleen Henkel, Diane Rowley, chair of the P&G Committee and Dee McDonald, Co-Chair of the Legal Committee.

Lisa Schneider made a motion, seconded by Susan Garlinghouse DVM, to accept the agenda. Motion passed.

Susan Kasemeyer moved to approve the June 12, 2023, Board meeting minutes, seconded by Susan Garlinghouse DVM. Motion passed.

Susan Kasemeyer made a motion to excuse Vance Stine - family vacation, and Maribel Paulson - volunteering at the Fort Stanton ride. Seconded by Connie Caudill. Motion passed.

Kathleen Henkel presented the statistical report:

Membership as of 7/27/2022	4296
Membership as of 7/15/2023	4082
Sanction fees as of 7/11/2022	\$11,950.00
Sanction fees as of 7/11/2023	\$12,485.00
Rider fees as of 7/11/2022	\$25,340.00
Rider fees as of 7/11/2023	\$29,103.00
New members as of 7/27/2022	479
New members as of 7/15/2023	458

Nick Kohut DVM reported the Committee reports have been sent to the Board for review.

Motion from the Protest & Grievance Committee

Diane Rowley presented the motion to revise Rule 14.1 and Rule 14.2.2 to Provide for Relief Sought by Protestor.

REVISION TO RULE 14.1 and 14.2.2 (deleted text from existing rule is shown in strike-through and text additions/revisions are underlined)

Rule 14.1 Introduction. Any AERC member, other than a single event member as defined in the AERC Bylaws, may bring a protest with the AERC Protest and Grievance Committee alleging violation of AERC Rules by anyone participating in any manner at an AERC sanctioned ride, including, but not limited to, a rider, equine owner, crew member, control judge, treatment veterinarian, ride manager or other ride management personnel. Anyone contemplating a protest must first attempt to resolve his or her complaint informally by

discussing the alleged violation with the person committing the violation and/or the ride manager ~~and/or appropriate regional director~~. In all cases, and in order to provide an additional opportunity to facilitate the resolution of a complaint, a regional director or a director at large from the region involved must be notified in writing of the intention to file a protest at least 5 days prior to the filing of the protest. All filings, submissions and other communications relating to the protest shall be in writing and transmitted electronically (email) unless requested otherwise by any of the involved parties, in which case communication shall be by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Rule 14.2.2

f. The action which the protestor requests the Protest & Grievance Committee take as authorized under Rule 15. The Committee may take the request into consideration in its deliberations but is not limited by the request in determining an appropriate sanction, if any.

Background, analysis and benefit- Rule 14.1 - The additional language merely makes the notification of a regional director or a director at large a requirement rather than an option and provides for at least minimal time for a director to understand and potentially mediate the dispute. In the event the notified director fails to respond or objects to the protest, the protestor is still free to file.

* Pursuant to this amendment, it is recommended that a line in the protest form be added stating merely "Penalty requested under Rule 15."

Rule 14.2.2 - The Protest & Grievance Committee often presides over protest actions that do not specify what type of relief the protestor is seeking. It leaves the Committee in the position of trying to determine what the protestor is seeking to accomplish and what, at least in the mind of the protestor, would be the most effective remedy for the issue in question. In addition, in the case of some protests, if the type of relief being sought was specified, the protestor might realize that their complaint may not be within the authority of or appropriate for the Protest & Grievance Committee to decide. This provision would not limit the authority of the Committee and/or Board to impose sanctions different from or in addition to that asked for in the protest.

Discussion was held. It was suggested that the protest filing form be updated with some of this information. Diane Rowley will work with the office on revising the form.

The rule would be implemented for the 2024 ride season.

Connie Caudill moved to approve this motion, seconded by Mike Maul. Motion passed with one no vote.

Motion from the Competition Committee to add a Pioneer Award Category for Limited Distance Riders
Naomi Preston presented the motion.

Proposed Motion: Add a National LD Pioneer Award for multi-day completions, to be modeled after the Endurance Pioneer award but which is based solely on miles and not points to de-emphasize racing.

Benefit and/or Impact to Membership and/or the AERC Organization: This award provides an incentive to our growing number of LD riders to ride more days at Pioneer rides,

generating more excitement for riders, more riders for Ride Managers, and more income for AERC.

Implementation plan: The Pioneer LD Awards could be advertised this Fall and would start with the 2024 season.

Discussion was held on the motion. A sponsor would be secured to provide these awards, which would be awarded to the top three places nationally. Concern was expressed that having several ties would require more awards. The award should not be given if a sponsor is not found. Horse welfare issues regarding 4-year-olds competing for this award were also brought up. Revisions to the database and website will be required to set up the category and track miles.

An amendment to the motion was made by Tim Worden that equines must be 60 months of age or older to be eligible for this award, which was seconded by Laurie Underwood.

The discussion continued. The Competition Committee would like the pioneer category to be available for rides that are at least 3 days with each day being at least 25 miles. The ride manager would need to indicate on the sanctioning form that they are applying for a pioneer ride.

Other questions were raised:

- (1) if a pioneer limited distance ride would need to be held in conjunction with an endurance ride?
- (2) How many pioneer rides are currently held and what is the regional distribution?

Nick Kohut DVM stated that this motion is just a concept for the award and that the criteria was ok to be brought back to the board.

Naomi Preston requested the motion be rescinded and will bring it back to the Board after the Competitions Committee has had time to research and address the comments and concerns.

Motion from the Competition Committee regarding Standalone Limited Distance (LD) Rides

Lisa Schneider presented the motion.

Proposed Motion: Remove the requirement for a Limited Distance ride to be held in conjunction with an endurance ride.

In the rule book, the introductory section for Limited Distance rules currently says, "These rides must be included on the sanction form and held in conjunction with an AERC endurance ride". This sentence will be modified to remove the phrase "...and held in conjunction with an AERC endurance ride."

Additionally, rule L1 says "These rides must be sanctioned into the Limited Distance Program and held in conjunction with or within an adjacent 24 hour time period of an AERC Sanctioned endurance ride." This section will be rewritten to eliminate the redundancy between the introductory section and rule L1 and removing the requirement for LD rides to be held with an AERC endurance ride.

Background, analysis and benefit:

AERC's aging demographics have continued to show that LD riders are our largest group of riders. They are financing the longer distances so there's a significant financial benefit to keep the LD group growing.

1. AERC can help save trails by keeping an equestrian presence – use it or lose it because only 8% of trail users are equestrians.
2. Standalone rides would allow ride managers to hold a ride in areas that don't allow overnight camping.
3. Standalone LD rides can reduce the intimidation factor of overnight camping by having a single day event.
4. Standalone rides can incorporate regional organizations for education and Susan Garlinghouse offered to create an educational webinar on managing risks.
5. Standalone rides can bring in more new people who aren't yet ready for a 50 miler.
6. Special sanctioning could be used to ensure standalone rides don't compete with established 50-mile rides; potentially limit the standalone ride size.
7. Standalone rides can be scheduled as a 'feeder ride' for the area's next 25/50 miler.
8. Standalone rides can be used to recruit new ride managers to get experience before they step up to manage longer distances.
9. Standalone rides allow ride managers to hold a ride during weather prohibitive times of the year.
10. Standalone rides could also add an Intro ride to attract riders not quite ready for an LD.
11. Standalone rides can be used to emphasize that AERC is not just about the longer distances and that all riders of any distance are valued.
12. Standalone rides are a good reason to renew their membership for people who might've dropped because they're no longer riding 50 miles.
13. Standalone rides can be used as an outreach tool to bring in outside equestrian groups who may not know about our sport.
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Special sanctioning will be required for standalone LDs. This policy will include:

- Standalone Limited Distance rides can be sanctioned as long as there are no endurance distance rides sanctioned within a 500-mile radius and within two weeks, with the exception of other standalone LDs.
- Standalone LDs must go through Special Sanctioning every year.

- Any endurance distance rides will get precedence but once a standalone LD is sanctioned, it can't be un-sanctioned because a new endurance distance ride within 500 miles or two weeks is requesting sanctioning.
- It is suggested that the sanctioning directors could poll their region's ride managers when a new standalone ride requests sanctioning to ensure there are no conflicting dates.

The Implementation plan: Standalone rides could be advertised this Fall and start with the 2024 season.

The board spent a considerable amount of time discussing the advantages and disadvantages of sanctioning standalone LD rides. The item most Board members agreed on was that members should see the motion and give their feedback. The Board had mixed views on whether this would help or hurt the organization.

Nick Kohut DVM stated there was no real rush in passing this motion and that he would like to wait for feedback from our members.

Olin Balch DVM made a motion to table until we have feedback from the AERC membership through a very short survey. Connie Caudill seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Lisa Schneider and Laurie Underwood will work on the survey along with Connie Caudill/Sanctioning Committee. Naomi Preston would like to see the demographics of the people who respond to the survey.

Motion from the Competition Committee to Capture & Target Intro Riders attending AERC Rides

Naomi Preston presented the motion.

Ride Managers will submit Intro Riders names, addresses and emails at the same time as they submit their ride results. AERC will send a special email to the Intro Riders thanking them for their participation, encouraging them to attend another ride, and informing them of the benefits of joining AERC (educational materials, mentorship, camaraderie, points & awards). Provide Intro Rider info to their respective Regional Directors for further contact.

Background: AERC Membership has been in steady decline for many years. Intro Riders are THE BEST TARGET for increasing our membership. Ride Managers are already obtaining info from Intro Riders when they sign up at their rides. Intro Riders have taken the important first step into Endurance Riding, and we should do everything we can to make them feel welcome, invite them to ride again, and to join AERC. The benefits to AERC are more new members and greater income from new membership and additional rider fees. This would also benefit Ride Managers, with Intro Riders attending more rides.

AERC office would design a form for RM's to use to submit Intro Riders' info, collecting Intro Riders' data, sending them a welcome email, and forwarding Intro Riders info to their respective Regional Directors.

Discussion was held on the motion. The Board would like to have the ride results form revised so that ride managers will be able to send in the new rider information at the time the results are submitted. If the intro rider is an AERC member or past member, the AERC number could be sent in place of the contact information.

The motion from committee passed unanimously.

Motion from the Trails and Land Management Committee

Dawn Hilliard presented the motion regarding a grant for the Timberhill Trailhead water hydrant project.

The Trails and Land Management Committee moves that AERC, using designated Trails Grants, assist in funding a portion of the project to install a water hydrant at Timberhill Trailhead, located in the Big Hill Lake Equestrian Trail System which is managed by the US Army Corp of Engineers, Labette County (Cherryvale, KS). Funds requested: Up to \$800 from the dedicated Trails Grant fund.

This is the last trail head in this trail system which does not have fresh water access. While there is a lake nearby, due to the ongoing drought conditions the lake water level is very low and there is frequently a blue-green algae issue making the lake water dangerous. Having fresh water accessible at the trail head will be hugely beneficial to the equestrian users and users walking with dogs, etc. This request is coming from an AERC member active at the park at the request of the Army Corp of Engineers land managers. The Army Corp of Engineers will be laying 500 feet of pipe and installing a frost-free hydrant. Local trail groups have raised \$200 at various events and are receiving a \$400 grant from Labette Tourism council. Local riders have acquired donations of water tanks, hoses, and fittings worth \$150 to be permanently located by the hydrant. The entire project is projected to cost \$1600.

Benefit and/or Impact to Membership and/or the AERC Organization:

This trail system has hosted AERC rides off and on for 25 years. New management hosted the ride for the first time this year and the manager plans to continue organizing the event for many years to come. Having fresh water access at this location will mean water does not have to be hauled in from another location. Many local riders also use this trail system to train and there are many day riders who will benefit from this improvement. Project to be completed November 2023.

Motion from committee passed unanimously.

Motion from the AERC-I Committee

Connie Caudill presented the motion regarding a date change for the Young Riders Championship ride.

Move Young Riders Championship ride to Camp Far West, to be held on Saturday 10/28/23 (last date canceled due to snow). The ride will be a 75-mile event.

Motion from committee passed unanimously.

Motion from the AERC Technical Committee regarding a Policy for the Audit of AERC Computer Systems

Eric Rueter presented this motion for a policy.

Proposed Motion: Perform an audit of the AERC Computer Systems. Allow the AERC Tech Committee to access the AERC computer systems to determine if they are properly defined / setup and documented. John Parke seconded the motion in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order since there aren't two Board members on this committee.

Background, analysis and benefit: To the best of our knowledge, there has not been any oversight of the new systems implemented by third party vendors. AERC is now totally dependent on outside sources to maintain and upgrade AERC biggest asset. It is in AERC's best interest to assure that all of AERC's technical assets, policies and procedure are properly defined, adhere to generally defined best practices, and are documented in a fashion that should some emergency arise the solution can be easily found. It is also in AERC's interest that the AERC systems be documented in a manner such that if requests be made, either in the form of data retrieval queries, new functionality or correction of existing functionality, AERC has a good idea of what is required, and can properly communicate the request with the chosen vendor.

Discussion was held on this motion. Kathleen Henkel said she had confidence in the programmer. She stated that the system is functioning well. There are still a few more items that need some work by the programmer. She is very concerned about changes being made without her knowledge (which has happened in the past). She felt the Technical Committee should advise the office and the Board on a variety of IT matters, such as the hardware being used in the office, but that full access should be restricted to the office and the programmer. It should be noted that read-only access is not an option with a component of the database and website programming language. Kathleen can provide program documentation or a schema to Eric Rueter once the programmer has completed debugging the program. Eric Rueter felt documentation should be an ongoing process and believes that the Tech Committee could add value to the process and an audit/review of the programming structure of the database could help protect the program.

John Parke said the Board had asked for a revision of the access policy, not a motion for audit and that this motion is premature. He noted that a committee's function is to advise the Board and make recommendations on actions to be taken. The proposal should also specify to whom the audit results will be submitted and include recommendations to the Board based on those results. He also asked to whom the Technical Committee reports and renewed the request for the access policy.

It was noted that some questions would be answered in the next motion on the agenda.

Monica Chapman made a motion to table the motion until the Technical Committee clarifies access protocols. Seconded by John Parke. Motion passes with one abstention.

Motion from the AERC Technical Committee regarding the Tech Committee's Position Statement

Eric Rueter presented the motion.

Proposed Motion: It is the policy of the AERC Tech Committee to provide technical assistance and oversight to AERC.

Background, analysis and benefit: The AERC Board should have a committee to provide assistance and oversight of all AERC technologies.

Discussion was held on what is expected in this position statement. John Parke offered to provide a brief outline/format for the Technical Committee to follow.

John Parke moved to table the proposed position statement policy until the Technical Committee works on a revision with clear clarification on access protocol. Lisa Schneider seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion from the Inclusion and Diversity Subcommittee to Add Donation Option for Inclusivity Committee to New/Renewal Member Form

Jessica Cobbley put forth the motion.

This motion adds to existing donation options by adding a line for the Inclusivity Committee onto existing online membership page which members use to join or renew their memberships with AERC.

Background, analysis and benefit: Adds the option for interested members to support the activities of the committee, while potentially adding to funds available for the committee to provide services that support and encouragement involvement of marginalized individuals into AERC activities.

Budget effect/impact: Estimated 3-5 hours of IT time to implement and test. If done by outside vendor @ \$40/hr, this may cost up to \$200. A member of the sub-committee has committed to donating up to \$200 for these expenses, thereby not incurring any additional expenses to AERC.

Benefit: Increased perception from membership of an AERC committee interested and active in encouraging marginalized riders, potential income from donations.

Implementation plan: To take effect with the start of the 2024 season.

Discussion was held on this motion. The Board asked the Subcommittee about the intended use for donated funds and for the criteria to determine which projects would be funded. A request was made for the subcommittee's charter. Jessica Cobbley stated that she would resend the subcommittee charter to the Board.

Lisa Schneider made a motion to table this motion proposal until a comprehensive policy on distribution of funds is submitted to and passes by the Board. Jan Stevens seconded. Motion passed with two abstentions and one no vote. The Board will reconsider the motion at a future meeting.

Motion from the Inclusion and Diversity Subcommittee to Prohibit Flags from AERC Events

Jessica Cobbley presented the motion.

The display of flags or banners at AERC events is prohibited. The only exceptions are the official flags of countries currently recognized by the United Nations, the current official flags

of the six branches of the U.S. military (United States Navy, Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Space Force), or banners posted by or with the specific approval of ride management to acknowledge sponsors, vendors or events. Ride management may, at their discretion, disqualify or otherwise penalize the rider(s) associated with attendees failing to comply after fair warning.

Background, analysis and benefit: There has been considerable upset and offense over political slogans or confederate flags being flown/displayed at AERC rides, in some regions more than others. The sub-committee proposes this motion to promote and encourage rider inclusion and to assist in keeping AERC events as politics-free as possible.

Please note that the very specific definitions of acceptable flags are included so as to preclude non-official militia or paramilitary groups, or flags of countries that in the past supported non-inclusive doctrines, but no longer do so.

Benefit: Increased perception from membership of being welcoming to all, and decreased tensions over politics entering our sport.

Implementation plan: To take effect with the start of the 2024 season.

Discussion was held on this motion. The banning of flags is a complex issue. First Amendment rights, the appearance of the organization making political statements and adding burdens to ride managers were concerns. It was noted that some state and federal lands have policies and laws which may conflict with this proposed rule, adding further complication. More legal research, input from the Legal Committee and input from our membership was requested.

Most Board members do not believe their regions have an issue with offensive flags at rides, but the committee reported that flags had been seen at a few rides that made certain riders feel unsafe. Some Board members objected to the word “may” in the sentence, "Ride management may, at their discretion, disqualify or otherwise penalize the rider(s) associated with attendees failing to comply after fair warning." It was felt rules should have enforceable language.

The motion was rescinded by the Subcommittee to make a more comprehensive and enforceable policy. The Legal Committee is to be consulted on criteria as it relates to private landowners as well as state and federal requirements and First Amendment rights.

Strategic Plan updates

Dawn Hilliard – the Trails group has been busy reviewing and presenting grants for the Board to consider. They will put the grants online.

Naomi Preston – the Education group is working on preparing a survey to send to new AERC members to determine their needs, such as a mentor, etc. The survey will be sent within 30 days of joining. They are also working on a new rider briefing. Susan Kasemeyer said the SE region has one and Kathleen Henkel indicated she has the presentation which she will to the group to update. They are checking with Troy Smith about preparing an index of past articles. The group will continue to provide monthly articles for publication in Endurance News, working on obtaining a cost benefit analysis of taping convention

presentations without taking away convention attendance, posting a Facebook education once a month, exploring ways to increase visibility of the program, matching new members with mentors, establishing a reward program for mentors and adding an FAQ section on the education tab of the AERC website.

Melissa Ribley DVM – the Welfare of the Horse group discussed updating fatality reporting procedures with the Veterinary Committee and is working with the Veterinary Committee on a PowerPoint presentation to recruit new veterinarians to the sport.

Mollie Krumlaw-Smith – the Finance group just received the June financials. Currently we are \$70,000 favorable to our operational budget, with \$46,000 in real savings, \$14,000 in sponsorships. The 2023 AERC convention made a profit.

Motion to adjourn was made by Susan Kasemeyer at 4:37 p.m. EST, seconded by Lisa Schneider. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Connie Caudill.