

August 10, 2024 AERC Midyear Board Meeting Minutes

President Nick Kohut DVM called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. EST.

Board members present were Bruce Burton, Kristin Seymore-Norsworthy, Connie Caudill, Marci Cunningham, Maureen Fehrs DVM, Bridget Helms, Dawn Hilliard, Nick Kohut DVM, Naomi Preston, Regina Rose, John Parke, Susan Kasemeyer, Vance Stine, Stephanie Palmer-DuRoss, Maribel Paulson, Susan Garlinghouse DVM, Tami Rougeau, Olin Balch DVM, Mollie Krumlaw-Smith, Bob Marshall DVM, Melissa Ribley DVM, Diane Connolly, Mike Maul, Eric Rueter, Jan Stevens, and Laurie Underwood. Executive Director Kathleen Henkel, AERC-I Committee Chair Tom Rajala and Stagg Newman were also on the call.

John Parke made a motion to accept the amended agenda which was seconded by Susan Kasemeyer. Motion passed.

John Parke made a motion, which was seconded by Susan Kasemeyer, to approve the July 8, 2024, Board meeting minutes. Motion passed with one abstention.

Vance Stine made a motion to excuse the following from the July 8, 2024, meeting: Susan Garlinghouse DVM (work emergency), Marci Cunningham (home emergency), Jan Stevens (family issue) and Mike Maul (weather related issues). Vance Stine also made a motion to excuse Stephanie Palmer-DuRoss from the August 10, 2024, midyear meeting due to work travel. Connie Caudill seconded both motions, which passed. (Note – Stephanie Palmer-DuRoss was able to dial in later.)

Kathleen Henkel presented the statistical report:

Membership as of 7/28/2023	4,116
Membership as of 7/30/2024	4,014
Sanction fees as of 7/30/2023	\$12,485
Sanction fees as of 7/30/2024	\$15,095
Rider fees as of 7/30/2023	\$32,101
Rider fees as of 7/30/2024	\$32,760
New members as of 7/28/2023	474
New members as of 7/30/2024	475

Update from the AERC-I Committee

Tom Rajala, Chair of the AERC-I Committee, updated the Board on the AERC International Committee. The Committee's focus is education, junior/Young Rider opportunities, support of Young Rider championship rides, trying to get AERC rides co-sanctioned with FEI and high performance. The Committee attributes an increase in 75-mile rides due to riders attempting to qualify for Worlds, and they expect an increase in the number of FEI rides as riders try to qualify for the 2026 Worlds. The AERC-I Committee needs new faces and will be holding elections for new committee members.

Approval of Executive Committee Decisions regarding Changes to Ride Sanction Requests

Nick Kohut DVM discussed recent decisions made by the Executive Committee regarding the addition of a 50/25-mile open division ride to the National Championship ride, a date change for the Lost Sierra ride and the addition of a 65-mile ride to the Camp Far West ride. Vance Stine made a motion to approve these decisions of the Executive Committee, which was seconded by John Parke. Motion passed.

Approval of Additional Mediators

Nick Kohut DVM explained that AERC had one mediator and needed additional people to serve in this role. Lianne Dorion (former chair of the Protest & Grievance Committee and former member of the Legal Committee) and Rebecca London (partner in the law firm of London Law, Inc.) have agreed to serve as mediators. John Parke made a motion to approve the addition of Lianne Dorion and Rebecca London as mediators. The motion was seconded by Vance Stine. The motion passed.

Update on the Status of the Trademark

Kathleen Henkel spoke with Chris Delfino's office regarding the status of our trademark and tradename efforts and was informed that applications are taking the U.S. Patent Office longer to process. They are taking more time to examine specimens submitted for approval because they are receiving an influx of fake applications from foreign entities. Kathleen will keep us apprised as to the status.

Update on the Status of the Green Beans Computer Program

Kathleen Henkel updated the Board and stated that the Green Beans computer program is working with the AERC computer program as intended.

Motion from the Trails and Land Management Committee regarding the Goethe State Forest Sign Project
Dawn Hilliard presented the following motion on behalf of the Trails and Land Management Committee:

The Trails and Land Management Committee moves that AERC, using designated Trails Grants, assist in funding a portion of the Trail Sign Project in the Goethe State Forest (Dunnellon, FL). Funds requested: \$803.

This request is coming from a ride manager (Jo Harder) representing all the ride managers who use this trail system for their events. In recent years, this trail system has seen increasing numbers of eBike users utilizing the trails. Many of these bikers have never previously encountered horses and do not know proper trail etiquette. This sign project will install signs at trailheads and major intersections providing information on appropriate interaction between bikes and equestrians. This knowledge will increase safety and improve the outdoor experience for all trail users.

The total cost of the project is \$1,400. The remaining cost will be covered by a Southeast Distance Riding Association (SEDRA) grant.

When disbursed, the funds will come from the dedicated Trails Grant fund.

This trail system hosts multiple established AERC rides and many AERC members train on this trail system. There are several work days annually which are well-attended by distance riders. As a result, there is a good relationship with the Forest land manager and AERC ride managers.

Motion from committee passed unanimously.

Motion from the Competition Committee to Establish a Fund for 100 Mile Ride Managers
Naomi Preston presented the following motion on behalf of the Competition Committee:

The Competition Committee moves to establish a fund for 100 mile ride managers (for existing, new, and reestablished 100's) by adding this fund to the list of other donation options available when a member renews their AERC membership, as well as accepting direct donations to the fund.

The 100 mile ride is the highest achievement in AERC, and is fundamental to our National Championship. However, AERC is losing 100 mile rides in many regions. In order to keep this distance available for riders, a fund for 100 mile Ride Managers is proposed. It would be available to four types of Ride Managers. 1) Existing 100 mile Ride Managers, particularly those with rides with few entries (less than 12) in jeopardy of being lost; 2) Ride Managers interested in adding the 100 mile distance to an existing ride; 3) New 100 mile ride Managers; 4) Ride Managers seeking to reestablish a 100 mile ride that does not currently exist (e.g. Big Horn). 100 mile rides require a greater monetary commitment from Ride Managers, particularly the additional Veterinarian expense, and this fund would help offset the added costs. In addition to funds secured by the renewal donation option, Julie Suhr has offered to donate 100% of her profits from her upcoming book to this fund. AERC could also solicit other individuals or groups to contribute to this fund.

Requirements would be to add a line on the current funds donation section of the renewal form, and setting up an account for the funds.

The benefit to riders is having more 100 mile rides to attend, and solidifying those rides in jeopardy. The benefit to Ride Managers is getting monetary help from AERC for their 100 mile ride. The benefit to AERC is keeping the 100 mile distance alive, as well as generating more income for AERC.

A lottery would be used to select RM's to receive funds. Prior to entering the lottery, the RM would need to get approval from their Sanctioning Director. Funds could be distributed in two alternate ways: 1) In the form of Gift Cards from tack suppliers that are AERC sponsors. We would work with sponsors to secure discounts on products, enabling funds go further. The value of the Gift Card would be \$250; 2) A Ride Manager could submit an invoice to AERC, and receive reimbursement up to \$250. This could be for the additional Veterinarian expenses, awards, glow sticks/lights, or anything pertaining to the 100 mile ride. Importantly, the Ride Manager can only use these gift cards or funds for 100 mile ride expenses, no other distance. The Sanctioning Director would oversee the RM's use of the funds, and if funds are misused, the RM would risk future sanctioning. To announce the new fund, we recommend an article in Endurance News as well as a post on the following Facebook pages: AERC, 100 Mile Riders, Ride Managers, and Regional groups (SERA, PNER, etc.). Additionally, a special email would be sent to Ride Managers. The 100 Mile fund could be implemented immediately on the renewal form, and the entries into the lottery could be submitted for rides in the new 2025 season. Separately, we recently learned a private donation was made for a fund for New 100 mile Ride Managers to receive \$500 for expenses. This separate fund has \$2000 remaining.

There was discussion about this concept, with concerns expressed regarding implementation and administration, and suggestions were made that AERC should consider measures which incentivize riders to participate in 100 mile rides. The motion was returned to the Competition Committee for revision and will be represented for consideration at a future meeting.

AERC Financial Report

Mollie Krumlaw-Smith presented the current financials. Currently we are favorable to budget by approximately \$73,000 to our operating budget, with the increase being due in part to the increase in membership fees, \$7,000 reduction in Endurance News costs, \$19,000 in cash sponsorships and donations, an increase in income from rising interest rates and Convention cost savings of \$7,000. Not all

of our expenses are in, and she expects a net income of \$91,000, which is approximately \$34,000 favorable to budget.

Motion from the Competition Committee regarding Standalone Limited Distance (LD) Ride Trial Dawn Hilliard presented the motion on behalf of the Competition Committee, for discussion only.

Beginning with the 2025 season, AERC will allow the sanctioning of single-event, Standalone Limited Distance rides for a trial period of up to three years (2025, 2026, 2027 ride seasons). All Standalone Limited Distance events will be considered Special Events and require approval of the Sanctioning Committee.

The following additional guidelines will be used when considering sanctioning for Standalone Limited Distance rides:

All Standalone Limited Distance rides must be at least 3 weeks or 400 miles away from an established ride with an Endurance Distance unless the competing ride managers give their written approval.

Only one Standalone Limited Distance ride may be held during an event (no multi-days or two rides on the same day).

The Regional Sanctioning Director will contact all ride managers who may be impacted. {note: this may involve more than one region, hence more than one Sanctioning Director.}

The Sanctioning form will ask the reason the ride cannot offer an Endurance Distance.

{acceptable reasons include: no overnight camping allowed at this venue, no way to get 50 miles of trail, weather conditions, etc.}

Standalone Limited Distance rides will not take precedence over rides offering Endurance Distances the following year.

The following rules would need to be updated:

Current: Rule 1. The ride must be at least 50 miles in length per day, up to a maximum distance of 150 miles in three days. For special sanction rides, see rule 16.2 and 16.2.1. Mileage is expected to be measured accurately. A 5% variance is acceptable due to human and mechanical error.

Proposed change: Rule 1. The ride must be at least 25 miles in length per day, up to a maximum distance of 150 miles in three days. For special sanction rides, see rule 16.2 and 16.2.1. Mileage is expected to be measured accurately. A 5% variance is acceptable due to human and mechanical error.

Current: Rule 16.2. Special event rides are series of rides on consecutive days, totaling three days or more, and a minimum of 150 miles. Sanctioning of such rides must be sent to the AERC Executive Director for distribution to the Sanctioning Committee at least 90 days before the ride date. Special event rides shall require approval of the Sanctioning Committee for the first two years or at any time a request to change ride dates.

Proposed change: Rule 16.2. Special event rides are (1) Standalone Limited Distance rides or (2) a series of rides on consecutive days totaling three days or more and a minimum of 150 miles. Sanctioning of such rides must be sent to the AERC Executive Director for distribution to the Sanctioning Committee at least 90 days before the ride date. Special event rides shall require approval of the Sanctioning Committee for the first two years or at any time there is a request to change ride dates.

Current: Rule L1. Limited Distance rides must be at least 25 miles but not exceed 35 miles in length. 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.

Proposed change: Rule L1. Limited Distance rides must be at least 25 miles but not exceed 35 miles in length.

Over the years, AERC has been losing rides and ride venues, with some regions affected more heavily than others. Issues such as loss of trails, loss of campgrounds, and aging out of management are often the reason for these losses.

The availability of Standalone Limited Distance rides can counteract some of those issues by allowing events at locations that do not permit overnight camping, increasing opportunities to bring in riders, veterinarians, and volunteers from new locations, increasing visibility of equestrians on local trail systems, encouraging new managers to run their first rides, and extending the ride season in some regions where weather is not favorable for longer distances certain times of the year.

There have been concerns that allowing Standalone Limited Distance rides will cause a greater loss of Endurance Distances, but the Special Sanctioning guidelines will mitigate the impact to established rides and new rides offering endurance distances. Standalone Limited Distance rides are intended to complement the Endurance Distances already on the ride calendar, not replace them.

Increased ride days will increase income from ride sanctioning fees, rider fees and new member fees.

The availability of Standalone Limited Distance rides will benefit us in many ways, including:

- allowing events at locations that do not permit overnight camping
- increased opportunities to bring in riders, veterinarians, and volunteers from new locations
- increased visibility of equestrians on local trail systems
- encouraging new managers to run their first rides
- extending the ride season in some regions where weather is not favorable for longer distances certain times of the year
- increased income to AERC from additional ride days/new members

The impact on AERC Office would be staff time to process sanctioning applications and post results.

Start in the 2025 ride season and continue through 2026 and 2027 seasons. At the 2027 Convention (or before), the results of the trial program will be evaluated and the decision will be made whether to make Standalone Limited Distance rides permanent.

The Board spent a long time discussing the potential pros and cons of a standalone limited distance ride trial. The proposed sanctioning guidelines seem to alleviate many of the concerns regarding the impact on existing rides (to include splitting the pool of riders and veterinarians who participate in our current rides), and the length of the proposed trial period. Horse welfare concerns and some potential solutions were discussed, as well as AERC's need to recognize and balance the concerns and needs of existing members and new members while being fiscally responsible. The proposal will continue to be considered and discussed by the Board.

Discussion of Junior/Young Rider Programs

Maribel Paulsen, Chair of the Junior and Young Rider Committee, updated the Board on the status of the various Junior and Young Rider programs which include events at Convention, outings and other events at

the Northeast Team Challenge, and rides occurring or planned for the 2024 National Championship ride, the 2025 National Championship ride, and upcoming rides in Arizona and Oklahoma. The Committee has been successful in finding program sponsors. Additional programs are being discussed.

Discussion Regarding Ride Managers

Mollie Krumlaw-Smith, Chair of the Ride Managers Committee, held a discussion regarding various issues and concerns facing ride managers. One recurring question is a refund policy and non-refundable entry fees. The Ride Managers Committee is working on webinars to offer which will help ride managers to be better prepared on what to expect, how to budget for a ride, and how to clearly communicate with the riders.

Motion from the Tech Committee regarding an Electronic Portal Policy

Eric Rueter presented the motion on behalf of the Tech Committee:

The AERC Tech Committee has attempted over many variations to convince the AERC BoD that there is a more secure, less manual way of allowing Ride Managers / Secretaries and other entities that have a need to verify publicly available data. In a memorandum from AERC's Legal Counsel, recently requested by the Executive Committee, Chris Delfino writes "...Access to Member or Rider Information for Race Purposes. Access to member or rider Personal Information should be limited to the greatest extent possible. If member or rider Personal Information does need to be shared for race or other AERC purpose, it should only be shared through a secure electronic portal...."

First and foremost, it needs to be noted that nothing being requested to be made available through a secure electronic portal is not currently available through the website. Some of the data currently is made available in XLS (EXCEL 1995-2003) format. The difficulty with this is there are now problems with supplying this more than twenty-year-old format. The end user has to "manipulate" the data through manual processes to assure a properly formatted data structure. This method of extracting the data into an EXCEL spreadsheet, downloading that spreadsheet to a computer and then storing it in a format which allows the recipient to analyze or use the data, worked great in 2004 when downloading of members and horses started, but it is not the best method to use today. There are much better, quicker and more secure methods of allowing read only secure access for any entity that can show a legitimate need for the data from AERC. One of those methods is using a secure electronic portal, as noted in the memorandum from AERC Legal Counsel, or using a different name REST API.

This is the way a "secure electronic portal" works (using AERC Members as an example):

1. An external program such as ERICV2, Green Beans, Simple Online Entry, JR/YR TEAMS Issues a request to a AERC Secure Electronic Portal for membership information.

i. Request consists of:

Type of request such as

Single member

List of active / current membership

List of the entire membership

Requestor's Membership number

Requestor's Membership password

2. AERC Secure Electronic Portal receives request.

AERC Secure Electronic Portal performs the following:

i. Verifies member number

ii. Verifies member password

- iii. Verifies member eligible to make the request (NOTE1)
- iv. Logs request (NOTE2)
- v. Performs appropriate query of the AERC data
- vi. Formats return and transmits data to the requesting program

3. The originating external program receives and processes data sent from AERC.

NOTE 1) It is up to AERC to create a verification process. The suggestion would be at a minimum, to verify that the AERC member is a Ride Manager / Secretary within a given amount of time (six months prior to the earliest event?). An alternate method would be to add a new table, where the AERC Office maintains the valid recipients in the table. A third method would be a hybrid of the two. The first method takes no additional work on the part of the office, and still limits who gets access. What the first method does not allow for is “exceptions”. The second method requires the AERC Office to maintain the “list” of all valid requestors which would create additional workload. The third method (hybrid of methods one and two) means the AERC Office only has to add, delete “exceptions”. Exceptions would be one-time requests, or on-going requests that are not directly tied to an individual Ride (Green beans, Simple Online Entry, Team Competition ...) or when a Ride Secretary is not listed as a member of ride management.

NOTE 2) AERC would need to create a log table and process, which records the member, request type, date stamp, record count, and success / failure status reason. The “logging” process could also generate an eMAIL with the same information being addressed to the requestor and the AERC Office eMAIL(s). This log could be reviewed by the AERC Office occasionally to assure that things are working properly.

The same basic process applies to requests such as equine information, event results and possibly others as needed.

Why is there a need for sharing this data? Ride Managers / Secretaries, AERC associated, but externally supported programs, and possibly some regional organizations have applications that rely on accuracy of AERC Membership, Horse and Results data. Currently to verify membership, a RM/RS, or organization such as Green Beans or the many regional organizations, must either go through a cumbersome and possibly unsecure process to download and manipulate this data, or continuously sign onto the AERC website and individually lookup members, horses and results.

As stated above, the current mechanism for retrieving just Horse and Membership data, is to “download and open save as to clear up the file anomaly. This process cannot be automated and can be perceived as time consuming. The other option is to sign into AERC, then verify a membership / horse – assuming you have internet access when and where you need the information.

Budget effect/impact Between \$500 and \$1500.

These should be of good use to the regional organization, both during awards time, and to their membership chairs

Work load over time should be reduced

A lively discussion took place regarding this motion. It does not comply with the terms of the AERC closed access policy which was passed by the Board of Directors at the April 8, 2024 meeting. During the

discussion it was noted that the Tech Committee has previously submitted similar motions which did not comply with the terms of the Tech Committee's access policy which was passed in October 2023. A vote was held on the current motion, with three votes for, no abstentions and the remaining votes against. The motion failed.

Strategic Plan Discussion

John Parke and Stagg Newman (past AERC Board member and past President) led a discussion concerning AERC's current Strategic Plan, and whether it serves AERC's planning needs in its current form. Discussion was held regarding the formation of an ad hoc committee to determine whether AERC should keep our current Strategic Plan, abolish it, revise it or bring in non-board members to help make that determination. Stagg Newman recommended that if AERC decides to continue a Strategic Plan, that the Board establish three goals and work towards them.

Susan Kasemeyer moved to adjourn at 3:57 p.m., seconded by John Parke. Motion to adjourn passed.

Respectfully submitted by Laurie Underwood, on behalf of Connie Caudill.