June 8, 2026, AERC Board Meeting Minutes

President Nick Kohut DVM called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m. EDT.

Board members present were Chelsea Arnold, Olin Balch DVM, Bruce Burton, Connie Caudill, Marci Cunningham, Maureen Fehrs DVM, Bridget Helms, Dawn Hilliard, Susan Kasemeyer, Nick Kohut DVM, Bob Marshall DVM, Mike Maul, John Parke, Maribel Paulson, Naomi Preston, Melissa Ribley DVM, Regina Rose, Tami Rougeau, Khristin Seymore-Norsworthy, Laurie Underwood, Ashley Wingert, Lara Worden and Executive Director Giulia Orth.

Connie Caudill moved to accept the agenda with Olin Balch DVM seconding the motion. The motion was approved.

Tami Rougeau moved to approve the April 13, 2026, meeting minutes, which was seconded by Laurie Underwood. The motion was approved.

Bruce Burton moved, and Tami Rougeau seconded, to excuse Olin Balch DVM from the April 13, 2026, meeting (health reasons) and to excuse Diane Connolly (ride management commitments at the AERC National Championship rides), and Mollie Krumlaw-Smith, and Jan Stevens (lack of cell service) from the June 8, 2026, meeting.
Vance Stine was absent from the June 8, 2026, meeting.

Giulia Orth presented the statistical report.

	2025	2026	Change	% Change
Total Members through June 1	3554	3370	-184	-5%
New Members through June 1	349	370	+21	+6%
Rider Fees through June 1	$16,558	$19,015	+$2,457	+14.8%
Sanction Fees through June 1	$16,905	$16,838	-$67	-0.4%
Starting Riders through June 1	4,611	3,655	-956	-20.7%

*Pending results from 10 rides on 6/1/2026

Committee Reports were presented by the Education Committee, Membership Committee, Welfare of the Horse Committee, Marketing Committee, National Championship Committee and Trails/Land Management Committee. The committees have been working hard. The committee reports are located alongside the Board meeting minutes on AERC.org webpage.

Ethics Committee - New Charter

The Board reviewed and discussed a new charter for the Ethics Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the AERC Ethics Committee is to serve as an independent, fair, and impartial body to review and investigate complaints alleging violations of AERC policies by Board members or Committee Chairs.

The Committee evaluates evidence, determines whether a policy violation has occurred, and provides findings and recommendations to the Executive Committee. While the Committee operates in an advisory capacity, its processes shall reflect principles of fairness, consistency, transparency in structure, and confidentiality in case handling.

Committee Structure & Governance

The Chair of the Ethics Committee shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors.

The Committee shall consist of three (3) to five (5) AERC members in good standing who are not currently serving on the Board of Directors or as Chair of another AERC committee. Members should represent diverse AERC regions and demonstrate familiarity with AERC bylaws, rules, and policies.

Committee members shall be nominated by the Chair and approved by the Executive Committee. The names of committee members shall be disclosed to the Board of Directors and made available to the membership; however, members shall not be publicly associated with specific cases.

Members shall serve staggered terms of two (2) to three (3) years to ensure continuity.

Any member with a conflict of interest in a matter must recuse themselves. A temporary replacement may be appointed by the Chair, subject to Executive Committee approval.

Standards of Review

The Committee shall evaluate all information using a "preponderance of the evidence" standard (i.e., whether it is more likely than not that a violation occurred).

The Committee may consider all relevant information, including witness statements and indirect evidence, assigning weight based on credibility, corroboration, and reliability.

Procedures for Filing and Reviewing a Complaint

Step 1: Filing a Complaint
A complaint must be submitted using the official AERC Ethics Complaint Form, obtained through the AERC office.

The complaint must:

- Be filed within thirty (30) days of the alleged incident (or last occurrence in a pattern of behavior)
- Include a clear description of the alleged violation
- Identify the individual involved
- Include all supporting documentation and evidence available at the time of submission

All submissions must be in writing and transmitted electronically.
Complaints determined to be frivolous, malicious, or submitted in bad faith may be dismissed, and the Committee may recommend further action.

Step 2: Review and Response
Upon receipt, the Committee will review the complaint for completeness and relevance.

A redacted copy of the complaint will be provided to the respondent. Redactions will be limited to what is necessary to protect confidentiality and prevent retaliation.
The respondent shall have thirty (30) days to submit a written response, including supporting documentation and witness statements.

The respondent shall be given a fair opportunity to review the substance of the allegations and respond meaningfully.

The Committee may conduct further investigation, including interviews with relevant parties.

Step 3: Investigation and Findings
The Committee will evaluate all submitted materials and any additional information gathered.

The review and investigation process should be completed within thirty (30) to forty-five (45) days of receiving the complaint, when reasonably possible.

The Committee shall issue a written report to the Executive Committee that includes:

- A summary of the allegations
- A summary of the evidence considered
- Findings regarding whether a violation occurred
- The rationale for the determination
- Any recommendations

If no violation is found, the Committee may recommend appropriate steps to restore the respondent's reputation where warranted.

Step 4: Executive Committee Determination
The Executive Committee will review the Ethics Committee's report and determine whether action is required.
The Executive Committee will notify both the complainant and the respondent in writing of its decision within fourteen (14) days of receiving the report.

Step 5: Recordkeeping and Confidentiality
All proceedings shall remain confidential to protect both complainants and respondents.

Confidentiality applies to case details, evidence, and participant identities where appropriate; however, it does not extend to the structure or membership of the Committee.

The Executive Director shall maintain secure and confidential records of all ethics proceedings.

John Parke asked for the following revision to be added under number 4: "If the Executive Committee adopts a decision, saying there has been a violation, it will be reported in executive session to the Board, and the Board will act in accordance under the bylaws."

John Parke moved to accept the committee charter with his revision, and Connie Caudill seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

<u>Motion - Nomination of Ethics Committee chair</u>.
Nick Kohut DVM, nominated Dinah Rojek to chair the Ethics Committee. Laurie Underwood seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Nick Kohut DVM, reminded the Board members of the Midyear Board meeting to be held virtually on August 22, 2026, beginning at 7:00 a.m. PDT.

John Parke made a motion to enter executive session, to discuss office updates at 8:39 p.m. which was seconded by Tami Rougeau. Motion passed.

Connie Caudill made a motion to exit executive session at 9:13 p.m. which was seconded by Tami Rougeau. Motion passed.

John Parke made a motion to adjourn at 9:14 p.m., which was seconded by Tami Rougeau. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Connie Caudill, Secretary.