

July 13, 2026, AERC Board Meeting Minutes

President Nick Kohut DVM called the meeting to order at 8:04 p.m. EST.

Board members present were Chelsea Arnold, Olin Balch DVM, Bruce Burton, Connie Caudill, Diane Connolly, Marci Cunningham, Maureen Fehrs DVM, Bridget Helms, Dawn Hilliard, Nick Kohut DVM, Mollie Krumlaw-Smith, Bob Marshall DVM, Mike Maul, John Parke, Maribel Paulson, Naomi Preston, Melissa Ribley DVM, Regina Rose, Tami Rougeau, Khristin Seymore-Norsworthy, Jan Stevens, Vance Stine, Laurie Underwood, Ashley Wingert, Lara Worden and Executive Director Giulia Orth. Also present were Diane Rowley (Chair of the Protest and Grievance Committee), Lancette Koerner, and Bonnie Girod.

Connie Caudill moved to accept the agenda with Naomi Preston seconding the motion. The motion was approved.

Naomi Preston moved to approve the June 8, 2026, meeting minutes, which was seconded by Tami Rougeau. The motion passed with one abstention.

Jan Stevens made a motion to excuse Vance Stine from the June 8, 2026, meeting which was seconded by Mike Maul. Motion passed.

Susan Kasemeyer was absent.

Giulia Orth presented the statistical report:

	2025	2026	Change	% Change
Total Members through July 1	3673	3,520	-153	-4.2%
New Members through July 1	393	411	+18	4.6%
Rider Fees through July 1	23,922	24,898	+\$976	+4.1%
Sanction Fees through July 1	17,305	17,208	-\$97	-0.6%
Starting Riders through July 1	5630	5107	-523	-9.3%

* Pending results from 5 rides on 7/1/26

Committee Reports were presented by the Competition Committee, Junior/Young Rider Committee, Ride Managers Committee and Veterinary Committee. The detailed committee reports may be seen alongside the Board meeting minutes at the Board Meeting Minutes section of the “About” tab on our website at www.aerc.org.

EDRA submitted a proposal requesting mileage reciprocity. Nick Kohut DVM asked whether any Board member supported changing AERC’s current policy on concurrently sanctioned rides. Since no Board member supported the requested changes, Nick Kohut DVM directed Giulia Orth and Naomi Preston to draft a response to EDRA.

Motion of the Juniors and Young Rides Committee regarding Junior Ride Entry Vouchers.

Maribel Paulson presented the motion.

An anonymous donor has pledged \$10,000 to launch the program. Donation opportunities will be added to the membership renewal form and remain available throughout the year. The voucher raffle process will begin after the donation is received.

Ride voucher raffle and opportunities to win:

1. There will be drawings for vouchers of all existing juniors on December 31, 2026. At least one voucher will be awarded to a junior in each region, subject to available funds. The number of vouchers per region may be proportionate to regional junior membership. We would like to budget the available funds so the program can operate on a three-year experimental basis.
2. Every month, there will be a drawing for the new juniors who have joined since December 31. All winners will be removed from the pool.

In 2027, vouchers will be \$100, have a unique ID #, be emailed to juniors, and remain valid for 12 months. They may be used for intro rides through 100-mile rides. Ride Managers may deduct voucher amounts from fees owed to AERC when submitting results for immediate financial benefit. Vouchers are not redeemable for cash or transferable.

Motion out of committee passed unanimously.

Motion of the National Championship Committee to Eliminate Young Rider Championship Ride.

Connie Caudill presented the motion.

The Young Rider division will continue to be included in the AERC National Championship Ride, making just one Young Rider Champion in each of the 50 and 100 mile rides. This will be consistent with the other weight divisions.

Annie Whelan proposed the 75-mile Young Riders Championship before AERC had a separate Young Riders division, giving young riders a direct competition opportunity. Because that division now exists, the NC Committee, in consultation with Annie Whelan, recommends eliminating the separate ride. The event has typically drawn fewer than 10 riders.

Motion from committee passed unanimously.

Motion of the Protest and Grievance Committee. Diane Rowley presented the motion (proposed changes underlined).

Proposed Motion:

1) 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. 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 five (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. In all cases falling within Rule 14 the filing date is determined by the date a filing is received by the intended recipient whether it be the AERC office or the Chair of the Protest & Grievance Committee.

2) 14.4.1 The ruling of the Protest & Grievance Committee will be in effect as of the date of the Committee's decision and will remain so throughout the appeal process if an appeal is filed. Upon appeal, the Board of Directors may uphold, reverse or modify the Protest & Grievance Committee's ruling.

3) 14.5.1 Initiation of Appeal. The protestor or respondent may appeal the decision of the Protest and Grievance Committee to the AERC Board of Directors by filing (either by electronic transmission or by certified mail, return receipt requested) with the AERC office a notice of appeal within ~~30~~ 20 days after the date of electronic transmission or mailing of the written decision by the Chair of the Committee.

4) 14.5.2 Submittals to the Board. Upon receipt of a valid notice of appeal, the AERC office shall serve the protestor, respondent and the Chair of the Protest and Grievance Committee either by electronic transmission (preferred) or by certified mail, return receipt requested, with a copy of the notice of appeal and the written statement of the grounds for appeal. Any party to the protest who chooses to oppose the appeal may file with the AERC office a statement of opposition to the appeal within ~~30~~ 20 days following the date of delivery of the electronic transmission or within ~~30~~ 20 days of mailing of the copy of the notice of appeal by the AERC office. After the time to file a statement of opposition to the appeal has expired, the AERC office shall transmit to each member of the Board of Directors a copy of the complete record of the protest, including the original complaint form, all witness statements and other written materials submitted by the protestor and the respondent, all correspondence from the Chair of the Committee, any written extensions of time period for

filing, any record of investigation or hearing by the Committee and the written decision of the Protest and Grievance Committee, together with all documents timely filed by either party to initiate the appeal or to oppose the appeal.

5) Rule 15.5 Upon motion by a Board member or the Chair of Protest & Grievance Committee and pursuant to Rules 15.3 and 15.4, the Board of Directors may impose a penalty for a violation under 15.1.b. Written notice of the motion shall be sent to the person(s) named in the motion with the opportunity to file with the AERC office within 20 days of notice of the motion a written response to the motion which will be presented to the Board together with the motion.

Background, analysis and benefit:

1) This is to clarify what is meant by “filing.”

2) There have been several attempts by parties to prolong the effective date of a P&G ruling by intentionally dragging out the appeal process. Although there currently is no Rule specifying when a ruling takes effect, it has been a long-standing unwritten policy of the P&G (existing well before the current Committee’s composition) to delay the effective date of its ruling in the case of an appeal until after the Board rules on the P&G decision. Because the proposed Rule 14.4.1 would be a change of existing practice, a new Rule clarifying the process is advisable. As the practice stands now, a party can effectively manipulate the appeal process to delay a final Board decision for up to 4 months or more after the date of the P&G decision. And, with the timeline for filing and responding to a protest built in, it could well be 7-8 months after a protest is filed before a final decision is made, allowing a rider who has been sanctioned under a P&G ruling to continue to compete long after the initial violation. The proposed Rule is consistent with the practice in Criminal Law and will incentivize a party wishing to appeal to act as quickly as possible. Additional Rule changes tightening up the timeline in the appeal process to expedite things are also being proposed.

3) This is intended to expedite the appeal process. Since a party cannot introduce any new evidence on appeal (Rule 15.5.3), 20 days should be adequate to prepare and submit an appeal. It is also consistent with the timeline that Board members have to review the record on appeal. Rule 14.5.4.

Currently there is no formalized mechanism for addressing a violation under Rule 15.1.b: “Failure to obey any penalty imposed by the AERC.” Requiring a protest in such circumstances is unnecessarily cumbersome, requiring some party to file yet another protest and with the potential of further dragging out the process with appeals, etc. This rule would permit the Board to quickly address the issue with finality. As an aside, this proposed rule could be expanded to include any infraction under Rule 15.1. Rule 15 grants the Board the authority to take action in such matters and this would provide a mechanism for doing so.

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

The motions are intended to clarify and streamline the protest process which all too often is seen by the membership as taking an inordinate amount of time, with penalties only taking effect long after the violation. The rules, as they currently stand, are also subject to being manipulated by those who have a mind to do so solely for the purpose of delaying the imposition of a penalty as long as possible. This is especially so with the appeal process. Similarly, the proposed Rule 15.5 would allow the Board to act quickly and effectively in the case of a violation of an existing penalty. Rule modification will be added to the rule book with the changes to take effect at the beginning of the 2027 Ride calendar.

After discussion, John Parke moved to approve the Rule 14 changes and to defer Rule 15.5 to the midyear meeting; Vance Stine seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion of the Veterinary Committee to Limit the time period to 15 days for the Person Responsible to request drug testing of the “B” sample. Melissa Ribley DVM presented the motion.

Change the current AERC Drug Testing Policy to (changes underlined): The procedures for reviewing positive tests by the independent laboratory and filing protests are described in Rule 13 and the procedures for handling protests are described in Rule 14. Additionally, when the AERC Executive Director submits any laboratory report to the Veterinary Committee and the Legal Committee for their initial review under Rule 13, the Executive Director shall not include the name of the horse tested or its rider. Also, once a protest has been filed, the Protest and Grievance Committee shall electronically communicate with the protested party following the filing of a protest for violation of Rule 13 that shall give notice to the protested party of the right to a confirmatory analysis of the “B” sample at that party’s cost. The protested party shall have 15 days from the date of notification to file a written request to the AERC office for confirmatory analysis of the “B” sample. The request can be submitted in writing or electronically but in either case must be received by the AERC office within the 15 day period.

Background, analysis and benefit

The current drug policy does not indicate a timeframe in which the respondent has to request a testing of the B sample. This lack of clarification can result in the protest procedure being drawn out for an extended period of time. This addition to the drug testing policy provides clarification to persons responsible who wish to have a confirmatory analysis of a positive drug test.

To be implemented immediately.

Motion out of committee passed unanimously.

Motion from the Executive Committee to approve the Revised Charter of the AERC Ethics Committee.

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 or conduct unbecoming by Board members or Committee Chairs.

The full charter is available at the Committee section of the "About" tab on our website at www.aerc.org.

Motion out of committee passed unanimously.

John Parke moved to adjourn at 8:49 p.m. Bruce Burton seconded. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Connie Caudill, Secretary.