



Helping Communities Leverage Their Outdoor Recreation Assets

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Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia

Special Board Meeting Minutes

July 8th, 2025 | [2:00PM]

Prepared by: Delia Palmisano (info@orcaohio.com)

ORCA Board Members Present:

- Steve Patterson, Chair
- Tim Warren, York Township Trustee
- Jay Kline, Buchtel Council Member

Others Present:

- Jessie Powers, Executive Director, Sky Pettey, Legal Council

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Steve Patterson. Quorum was confirmed with three members present.

AGENDA OVERVIEW

The meeting was called to discuss two primary items:

1. Use and strategy for recently awarded \$1.5 million in operating funds over two years.
2. Consideration of a strategic planning retreat for the ORCA Board.

ROLE OF THE BOARD

Chair Patterson opened with a discussion of the role of the Council of Governments (COG) Board. Jessie Powers affirmed that the board sets ORCA's mission, vision, and scope of work, and staff are responsible for implementing the board's direction.

\$1.5M STATE OPERATING ALLOCATION

Jessie Powers provided an overview of ORCA's financial status and presented preliminary ideas for use of the \$1.5M (\$750K per year):

- Immediate priority: Repay the current line of credit (recently increased to \$700,000) used to front project costs, particularly construction.
- Explore contracting with Your Part-Time Controller, a nonprofit accounting firm, to establish streamlined financial procedures, train internal staff, and ensure compliance.
- Increase staffing capacity or reevaluate how ORCA and the nonprofit operate in tandem. Evaluate and action plan for ORCA sustainability by analyzing progress and feasibility surrounding ORCA membership dues, infrastructure funding, and ORCA/nonprofit social enterprise revenues.
- Consider how to balance the nonprofit's focus on the Baileys Trail System with ORCA's regional work including findings from the Appalachian Regional Commission supported ARISE Planning Grant with the PA Wilds Center and 18-county coalition of service area stakeholders and formal ORCA Partner jurisdictions.
- Evaluate five years of learnings, implementation, and investigation surrounding revenue-generating pathways through infrastructure development, regional branding, local product sales (e.g., at the WANE), social enterprises, regional planning, regional convening, and visitor engagement.

Steve Patterson emphasized using funds to complete the Baileys Trail System, as originally envisioned in 2018. He advocated for visible outcomes from the funding, including construction and potential placement of unused funds into interest-bearing CDs. Jay Kline and Tim Warren echoed the importance of fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability.

Jessie noted that the current trail construction contract includes at least 20 miles (bringing total to ~78 miles) and that trail buildout, visitor center, and trailheads are all expected to be completed by 2026–2027. Jessie clarified that ORCA has secured funding for nearly all elements of the Baileys Trail System as originally envisioned, and that operating revenues are the most difficult to find. If this year's trail construction does not complete the full system trail construction grants should be pursued next year instead of utilizing operational revenues.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The board agreed on the need for a formal strategic planning retreat. Jessie proposed a two-day format to address:

- Staff roles and capacity
 - Structure and sustainability of the nonprofit vs. ORCA
 - Evaluation of projected vs. actual outcomes from early Quantified Ventures modeled social enterprises
 - Revenue-generation strategies through public-private partnerships, corporate social responsibility, and regional branding
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FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Steve Patterson suggested allocating a portion of the 2026 \$750K installment into short-term CDs to earn interest until needed. Jessie agreed and added that ORCA is actively pursuing grants and sponsorships for capital and operational stability, as most grants do not cover operating costs. The team is also investigating endowment and Corporate Social Responsibility opportunities to support long-term needs.

DEBT & REIMBURSEMENTS

Jessie reported:

- ORCA is awaiting ~\$800K reimbursement from ODNR tied to land acquisition.
- Additional reimbursement is pending from the POWER Grant and the ODNR AMLER Grant.
- The existing line of credit may need to be increased again if reimbursements are not processed by July 24.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Board members reiterated the urgency of completing the Baileys Trail System.
- Jessie confirmed the visitor center construction is scheduled for completion in December of 2026. A small campground remains the last unfunded priority for the full Baileys vision.
- Jay Kline asked about future direction once the Baileys system is complete. Jessie emphasized ORCA's broader regional work, such as the ARISE Planning Grant and emerging digital infrastructure for rural economic development as the most promising avenues for ORCA to pursue long-term sustainability and fulfill the mission to provide economic, social, health, and environmental benefits to the Appalachian Ohio region and partners spanning 18-counties. Additionally, Jessie emphasized the need for strategic planning expertise commensurate with ORCA's work as a council of governments advancing regional outdoor recreation economy building, nonprofit operation of social enterprises involving legal structuring revenue generation and reporting, supported by the state of Ohio, and other ORCA planning efforts and findings.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting.

- *Motion by:* Jay Kline
 - *Second by:* Tim Warren
 - *Vote:* All in favor *Motion carried*
- Meeting adjourned.



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