

Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia Meeting Minutes August 30, 2024, 3:00 PM - 4:00PM Prepared by Haleigh Jankowski, info@orcaohio.com

ORCA Board Members Present: ORCA Chair City of Athens Mayor Steve Patterson, York Township Trustee Tim Warren, Nelsonville City Manager Tom Cangemi, Buchtel Council Member Jay Kline, Athens County Commissioner Charlie Adkins
(Members Not Present: ORCA Vice-Chair Mayor Amy Renner)

Others Present: Jessie Powers, Elle Dickerman, Sky Pettey, Jason Reed, Rachael White, Kerry Johnson, Dawn McCarthy, Delia Palmisano, Chloe Challacombe

- **Meeting Agenda**

- Approve Agenda
- Approve May 23, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Director's Report
- Maintenance Report
- Communications Report
- Public Comments
- Other
- Adjourn

Meeting Call to Order, 12:20pm, Steve Patterson

(Motion to approve agenda: Steve Patterson; Second: Jay Kline)

(Motion to approve May 23rd meeting minutes: Charlie Adkins; Second: Tim Warren)

ORCA Board Member Updates

Jay Kline: I want to thank Jessie and all of the people that were involved in our park celebration on the 21st, which went excellent. Thank goodness the weather worked out the way that we hoped and that set the tone. We likely had over 300 people there. I was pleased with how it all went and you did a great job presenting that night, I've gotten great feedback.

Steve Patterson: One thing I want to share is that it seems like every time I turn around, and I'm traveling and engaging for example through the National League of Cities, it's not uncommon for me to hear comments about the Baileys Trail System and the work that's being done here in Athens county. Back in 2017, we made the right decisions. I'm a true believer that this is one of the best things that has ever happened in southeast Ohio from an economic development standpoint. The Baileys has certainly been advantageous to the vitality of the Chauncey community.

Tim Warren: I've received an email from a lady twice wanting to apply for grants for green space for playground equipment in the township. I didn't know whether that might be something you might have looked into.

Jessie Powers: Yes you can send that to me.

Without administrative financial staff and in an effort to be transparent please accept these bank account statements for now highlight things are operating as planned, and once we fill this position all monthly reports will be provided.

(Motion to approve financial report: Jay Kline; Second: Tim Warren)

Directors Report

Jessie Powers: My normal director's report is on the back here displaying the progress that we've made in the last three months per project. I would like to discuss proposed ORCA Bylaw amendments listed.

We need to amend the timeline and likely the amount of ORCA Membership Dues, and I will be surveying ORCA Partners to gauge their interest in ORCA's services and what they might be able to pay for those services to inform long-term organizational planning. As an entity created to build regional capacity to utilize outdoor recreation assets to deliver health, economic, social, and environmental benefits to a region we really need the region's input on how to best help. Also to keep in mind, Membership dues are in-kind and grant administration funds that support ORCA. For instance Chauncey is providing property to build the hub building; we're going to be able to receive administrative funds on that grant, and similarly for the Village of Buchtel Trailhead Development.

Additionally, a proposed bylaw amendment would provide a 30 day notice for nonpayment as a withdrawal condition is one amendment for consideration. This would allow the member of the board the opportunity to go back to the respective jurisdiction and make the payment or have an official resolved binding statement of intent and timeline for payment from the member jurisdiction and governing board legislative body or financial authority.

Also proposed in an addition of a clause if payment or intent to pay is not provided that member jurisdiction would be removed from the cog. As we're considering expansion to other jurisdictions, I think we want to be really sure that our bylaws are in a condition that gives us the authorities that we would need to operate.

The second potential amendment would be to appoint proxies, and Sky can advise us on this.

The third potential amendment here is to add a code of conduct section, which outlines members and their duties to the ORCA Board. Again as we're considering addition of other Members we need to ensure all Board members operate using common sense and professionalism that won't adversely affect our ability to perform our duties and serve the region's communities.

Sky Pettey: The only issue I see with the proposed bylaw changes is with the voting by proxy. Regional Council of Governments, the members of which include at least eight counties, may include a provision authorizing, attendance or voting by proxy. So we would have to have eight counties as members. That's not just eight members, that's counties in particular, because the statute definitely can distinguish between counties and obviously says that governmental entities other than counties can be members. It's pretty clear that unless you've got eight counties as members, you can't vote by proxy.

Steve Patterson: As someone in support of the Baileys Trail System's planning since 2017, I was one of the charter members to start the ORCA board. Loyalty is critical, if you want to be a part of ORCA and you want to be supportive of the Baileys Trail System, then service on this board makes sense. Board members should be committed to what we are doing, which is trying to increase the prosperity of Southeast Ohio and Athens County.

Tim Warren: The only thing that bothers me is the duty of obedience listed in the example document.

Jessie Powers: I believe this isn't about stopping anyone's opinion, but only to make clear a board member wouldn't intentionally disregard the work that's being done, speak ill of the organization, or make comments that would adversely impact the work. I'm happy to work with Sky to refine that language to be more clear.

Jay Kline: I'm wondering who executes this. Let's say I'm in a non-compliance with the duty of obedience. Do you bring it to the board and they decide if I'm out or not? Or who does?

Steve Patterson: Maybe it would be no different than us as a board entering into executive session, during a board meeting to where we could discuss.

Jessie Powers: I believe that makes sense and failure to comply with the ORCA Code of Ethics would be an additional withdrawal clause. If a board member is removed

then the respective jurisdiction would have the opportunity to appoint a different board representative. Would the board like to vote on this today or circulate discussed revisions via email?

Steve Patterson: Let's circulate a draft for revisions, and I'd like to get this done by the next meeting. I would also like to have an open conversation with the board members about the rates as they exist for membership fees and discuss a more reasonable membership rate moving forward for those who are paying, recognizing that a lot of that's going to operations. Without operations funding and ORCA, there wouldn't be Baileys. It would just go back to a forest and that's not acceptable to me.

Jessie Powers: Absolutely, I'll work with Sky and circulate a draft. ORCA's expansion to include Partners built relationships and the Baileys is our proof of concept project, which puts us in a great position to collect input from partner communities to help shape ORCA's and the region's future. Because this is a council of governments created to build regional capacity, this is not a job that I can do by myself without input of board members representing their jurisdiction.

When we're thinking about expanding to membership in other counties, the big difference is projects. It's the physical infrastructure that we're putting on the ground. That's what we're delivering here; the Baileys Trail System is a one-of-a-kind more than \$9.1MM asset. Also, ORCA's operations funding can't only come from local governments, it doesn't now and won't moving forward either. Local support is a piece of the puzzle that helps leverage other resources to support operations. I have a couple other updates to share as well.

We have advanced the regional brand initiative in the 2021 ORCA Power grant through coordinating with the ORCA advisory committee, the region's tourism stakeholders. The ORCA team and Advisory Committee decided to utilize those funds to have a consultant create a regional brand for south-southeast Ohio. We're thinking of something equivalent to the Pennsylvania Wilds. We have awarded a contract to Blue Ion and they will be here September 17th to begin that process.

Other good news, ORCA's USDA Rural Business Development grant submitted in February was awarded and accepted in the amount of \$74,558. That grant provides funding for ORCA staff to expand our work in Monroe, Morgan and Noble Counties. We'll be doing this work alongside ACENet as they serve local businesses, we'll be focused more on the rec assets, maintenance planning, communications.

The Pelotonia gravel race date changed to September 21st and a Baileys Ohio Mountain Bike Challenge race has been scheduled for September 15th. I request authorization to permit those events pending all application materials are received and in order.

(Motion to approve Pelotonia Gravel Day and Ohio Mountain Bike Challenge Races: Steve Patterson; Second:)

Jessie Powers: We had the finance administrator position out in May, we interviewed three candidates. I'd like to request that we bring in our highest ranking candidate to conduct an assessment, pending the results of that assessment and in person interview I'd like to offer her the position.

Charlie Adkins: **(Motion to go into executive session to talk about employment of public employee; Second: Tim Warren)**

Steve Patterson: The motion has been made and seconded to enter into executive session to discuss the hiring of an employee. Please indicate who you want in the executive session.

Charlie Adkins:

The executive director and legal council.

Steve Patterson: We have come out of the executive session with no actions taken and so we will move forward with our meeting.

Jessie Powers: I would like to request board authorization to fill the finance administrator position, following an accounting skills assessment of our top contender. I would like to offer the position at the full pay range and benefits listed in the description.

(Motion to fill finance administrator position following a skills assessment: Steve Patterson Second: Jay Kline)

Jessie Powers: For the new ORCA office location at ACEnet's facilities in Nelsonville a draft lease was shared. I request authorization to enter into this lease.

(Motion to enter new lease for new ORCA office: Jay Kline Second: Tim Warren).

Jessie Powers: Vinton County support submitted a Federal Highway's active transportation infrastructure investment planning grant for \$1.2 million of active transportation planning. We supported this application in hopes of submitting a nationally competitive proposal. Vinton County and Jackson Counties are using Appalachian Community Grant funds as a project match.

Jessie Powers: Here is the design for the Buchtel Snow Fork Trailhead, which is quickly nearing completion. Jay and I have been working on this for at least 6 years if not more.

Steve Patterson: Where are things at with ODOT right now?

Jessie Powers: The design team needs to schedule a review meeting with ODOT. During this weeks design review meeting we requested a proposed eight foot wide path be increased to ten feet, but it's a tight fit in a few places. I asked them to bump that out as much as possible. We requested a guardrail between the state route and the bike path.

Maintenance Report

Elle Dickerman: We had the National Forest Foundation Matching Awards program grant that was awarded to the nonprofit in 2023. We were able to find a contractor this summer, DirtSculpt, LLC based out of Pennsylvania. They were able to complete the scope of that work, which was widening and enhancements and maintenance on Coal Train Trail, Bull Frog Loop, and Gob Pile Loop trail, which makes them accessible to adaptive mountain bikes. They're not ADA accessible, but they're now wide enough for adaptive bikes. When Adaptive Sports Connections visited the trails from Columbus a couple years ago, they pointed out a handful of spots that didn't quite work for their bicycles, so we were able to get those fixed and also address a number of high priority drainage issues. We're thankful to the Forest Service for partnering on this project.

Dawn McCarthy: There's a system for grading adaptive mountain bike trails. I've been in discussions with another consultant group that does trail assessments to to rank adaptive trail difficulty. They're willing to come here and talk to us about programming. It would really open up a lot of opportunities because there are so many people out there that have disabilities now. Especially a lot of military veterans that are looking for places to ride.

Elle Dickerman: Volunteers helped with this project's repairs, including one group of students who were on an exchange from Ecuador. We have put out to bid the RTP grant from 2023 for the construction of four to five miles of trail. We also had the Trailhead project and one of the trail reroute projects completed this summer over in Marietta.

Communications Report

Delia Palmisano: Chloe, our full-time AmeriCorps, who's coming on for a second term. Rachael's also coming on for a second term. We also had a Communications Intern through OU Work Study and a merchandising and retail intern, so just added a lot of capacity around general communications, merchandising, assessment and strategy. On social media our numbers consistently grow each month. So we're at 5,453 Facebook followers and 2,803 Instagram followers. The 30 day reach for Instagram was almost 2,030 a day and reach for Facebook was 9,600.

We've also been working on a lot more strategy around social media and various campaigns, around our voluntary membership. At the end of last year we were at 67 Baileys Trail System members, now we're at 98. That's coming in at around \$60 per member.

We started an FAQ campaign, we were getting the same questions over and over, e-bikes for example. We had an internal document where we could answer those questions, but we started thinking about an external document and a campaign around that to hopefully save ourselves some time going forward. We have that on social media and our website as well. Speaking of the website, we did work with Redtail to increase functionality based on UX principles.

Our quarterly newsletter went out on Wednesday. It went out to almost 600 recipients, up 85 recipients from the spring edition. The current open rate when I checked yesterday was 40%, but I anticipate that hopefully going up since it just went out this week.

The whole team's working on the Dirt Fondo, which is October 12th. Thus far our Dirt Fondo sponsors are, the Athens Sunrise Rotary, Athens CVB, All Out Nutrition, the Athens CougarBats, Ohio Opera, Precision Imprint, Bagel Street Deli, Steady Rack, GazpachMeUp, Baileys Base Camp, Frog Ranch, Voler, SourStrips and Baileys Campground, so that's pretty exciting.

Jackie Os did reach out to us, they're starting a new program, a monthly draft donation program, where they will have a nonprofit that they sponsor each month. At all three of their Athens locations, a dollar from every specific draft that they pick will go to that organization. That'll coincide with the Dirt Fondo, where we're doing our packet pickup.

Jessie Powers: Additionally, as we work with our ERC Fellow, Jess, comparing our work and value add to Ohio to corporate social responsibility has been really interesting. We've realized our region does not seem to do a good job at articulating its value to the greater state of Ohio.

Elle Dickerman: Some big news from the summer was we had our first year of Baileys youth trail crew. We had three seasonal AmeriCorps members through our partnership with Rural Actions AmeriCorps program overseeing 5 Summer Youth Program Participants, which was a huge help in keeping up with trail maintenance.

Jessie Powers: Lastly, ORCA has been invited to the Activating the Natural Resource Economy hosted by The Conservation Fund; this brings together stakeholders from across the country for peer learning, and attendees are coming from as far away as Hawaii. ORCA was also invited to the Outdoor Recreation Round table National Leadership Forum on Rural Development, which is presented by the Richard King Mellon Foundation. I'll be representing ORCA at both events.

(Motion to adjourn Jay Kline Second:Tim Warren)