# Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia

# Meeting Minutes

# January 26, 2023, 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

*Prepared by Lucas Blankenship,* lucas.baileystrails@gmail.com

ORCA Board Members Present: ORCA Chair City of Athens Mayor Steve Patterson, ORCA Vice-Chair Mayor Amy Renner, Athens County Commissioner Lenny Eliason, York Township Trustee Tim Warren (Not present: Buchtel Councilmember Jay Kline, Nelsonville City Manager Scott Frank)

Others Present: Jessie Powers, Elle Dickerman, Delia Palmisano, Sky Pettey, Lucas Blankenship

# Meeting Agenda

* Approve Agenda
* Approve November 10, 2022 Meeting Minutes
* Partner Updates
* Legal Updates
* ORCA Board Member Updates
* Financial Report
* Director’s Report
* Maintenance Report
* Public Comments
* Other
* Adjourn

**Meeting Call to Order, 1:01 PM, Steve Patterson**

# (Motion to Approve Agenda: Lenny Eliason; Second: Tim Warren; *Approved*)

**(Motion to Approve Meeting Minutes from November 10, 2022: Lenny Eliason; Second: Amy Renner; *Approved*)**

**Partner Updates:**

NONE

# Legal Updates:

# NONE

# ORCA Board Member Updates:

NONE

**Financial Report**

* Jessie Powers, Our account balance is $33,425.55. We have received cost share reimbursement from Wayne National Forest. We are waiting for ARC reimbursements for quarter 4 of 2022 in the amount of $103,239.88. Of that $23,094.56 will be ORCA’s reimbursement in an indirect amount. Our membership dues invoice has been sent. I’m scheduled with the city to report to the council on the 13th.
* Our big-ticket item, and we can talk about this at any point, it’s also in the directors’ report. This is the break down of the reimbursement request to be submitted to ODNR, that total is $640,506.65. The main topic of conversation I would like to get to today is, once we submit this report we are locked-in to our scope of work for the $2 million state budget award. So, we need to finalize what that scope of work will be.
* We actually have only spent about $640,000 of it. That was all we could get to in one construction season. We have agreed previously on adding the bike washing station in Chauncey with the State Capital Budget funds. Which costs $428,000. That $428,000 in addition to the bike washing station which requires the utility upgrade. Which is a part of how we get the utilities to the Hub. So, we really can’t take that out. But that puts our total committed cost for the State Budget to $1.64 million. So, we have a remainder of $359,521 here.
* When we were submitting the ACG application we learned that there is a new definition of shovel ready that I never heard of before. We are supposed to have the shovel in the ground in 90 days. But when we found that out in the middle of our 30-day application preparation, what we did was submit or post RFQ’s for engineering for those two projects because there no way you could do the design for both of those in 90 days upon contract award. So, we put those out there and received qualifications, but we really need a board decision as to how we want to use the remainder of the State Budget Fund before we make any kind of decision on that. So, that’s why those potential uses are for the design of those two proposed projects.
* There is a request for reimbursement in the amount of $315.35.
* We also have our tax reports done from MS accounting that I’ll be scanning in today and getting those in the mail. We also have our 1099s that will go out this week. We will be working on finalizing the 2022 financial report in advance of the council meeting. That will be shared with y’all once we have that finished.

* The 30-day turn around for the ACG application with two holidays in the middle has really overloaded us with all things we normally would be able to accomplish.
* Steve Patterson, Lets go back to the total being $1.6 million. That’s for the Hub?
* Jessie Powers, No. For our State Budget Award, we agreed to fund trail construction and bike washing station in Chauncey at a minimum, so just those two things.
* Amy Renner, So, that’s the total that has been spent so far from the State Budget?
* Jessie Powers, It all hasn’t been spent, but it’s under contract award. I think in theory we could terminate those contracts. I had to do that once before.
* Amy Renner, Contracts for trail construction?
* Jessie Powers, Yes, undesirable to say the least.
* Amy Renner, You were saying design for the remainder of the funds?
* Jessie Power, Yeah, we don’t have enough for both designs. My recommendation would be that if we want to move forward with design instead of trail construction that we would go for the Buchtel-Snow Fork Trailhead. I think those are going to be the most complex designs. We applied for this trailhead three times in 2022 and if we would have had the design done the first time we probably would have been funded through the EDA.
* Lenny Elision, How many miles have we contracted for, that we haven’t built yet?
* Jessie Powers, About 18 this year I think there’s 26 something in total.
* Lenny Elision, So we have 8.5 miles under contract to be built roughly.
* Jessie Powers, Roughly and they are planning on mobilizing as soon as possible. So, we will be at 49 by the time we open, that’s counting the full 18.\
* Elle Dickerman, We got 49 in 2023, there’s a section that probably wont be complete by opening but this year and whatever else they come out to do.
* Lenny Elision, So with the other 8 miles we will be at 57. How many miles can we get built out of $300,000?
* Elle Dickerman, It’s $25,000-45,000 per mile depending on how technical it is. Plus mobilization.
* Lenny Elision, So we could get about 10 more miles unless its more expensive and we could be about 8 miles for another $350,000.
* Amy Renner, I do think that the Buchtel Trailhead is an important element to add here, especially with the Snow Fork Event Center.
* Jessie Powers, My thinking is once we get to 57 miles multi-day destination length that’s the priority for the trail build out. It’s really the trailheads and those amenities like the Snow Fork Event Center that is going to bring visitors here and have the biggest economic impact. Just with the Snow Fork Event Center and what is planned for their operations of it was Stuart’s Opera House, it was projected to generate $5.3 million dollars a year, in one year. And that’s not having any recreation events.

* Steve Patterson, You said $25,000-$45,000 depending on technical it is.
* Elle Dickerman, Yeah, sometimes they will have a big rock section or do a bunch or armoring which can bring it higher or lower.
* Steve Patterson, Now is there 2 miles somewhere in the current plan that hasn’t been developed that is of that $25,000 price range? If I’m not mistaken, we’re looking at $359,000. Could we use that $50,000 to go with the Buchtel plan proposal for design and take that $50,000 and add 2 more miles? I’m trying to figure out the best return on investment at this point and time and how we weave all of this together. At the end of the day, we feel that the Buchtel Trailhead design gets us to that point or opens up that opportunity. Nothing is for sure obviously but making us more attractive for funding sources to get that across the finish line.
* Jessie Powers, I think that the trailhead there then becomes an anchor tenet for a transportation alternative application to connect the 1,200 kids at the school complex to the trailhead, connect to the Hockhocking Adena bikeway, etc.
* Lenny Elision, I am not opposed to spending the money on the design but I would like to get above 60. Because marketing 60 miles of mountain bike trails is a more magic number then marketing 57 or 58. You hit milestones with anything when your selling stuff, and when you’re marketing the trail are goal is to build 88 miles of trail. You know if we get to 60 all the sudden, we can say we have 60 miles of trails come ride them. The magic numbers you want to hit to get people to trigger more interested in what your after. You give them more bang for that buck.
* Elle Dickerman, We do have the 4 miles that the National Forest Foundation is committed to. So that would bring the 57 number to 61.
* Lenny Elision, I just want to get to a number that sounds like a lot. Where are we as far as size?
* Jessie Powers, Yeah, I think the biggest one in Ohio is Mohican and they’re around 25 miles.
* Amy Renner, Also, if we get the trailhead, isn’t the idea that we could also get more funding for the connection to the trailhead for the Baileys. I guess we would have to flush out that connection better.

* Jessie Powers, It does go across the whole Snow Fork Event Center. The connection is at the intersection of 685 it goes all the way around the edge of the property and into the forest there. And there would be a gate there for events, but if we have the design ready this would be exactly the type of thing that would hit the transformative bucket for ACG. It’s fundable through EDA, I think it could be a community facility through maybe USDA. I think it is the best use of our funds at this point. Just in case we do get that ACG award or some version of it.
* Amy Renner, It’s not like the design won’t be useful and we will always need this trailhead. It’ll be at the ready for whatever funds we can through at it.

**(Motion to approve Financial Report: Lenny Eliason; *Second:* Amy Renner)**

**(Motion to approve reimbursements in the amount of $315.35: Lenny Elision, *Second:* Amy Renner)**

**Director’s Report:**

* Jessie Powers, So our year end success story is that we our continuing to get grant investments. We’re doing a lot of work with volunteers; we did add some new sponsors and we will get their signs on the sign before the trails open this year. Right before this meeting we were on a call talking about this grant, so were going to have another sponsor.
* The ODNR AMLER grant for the visitor center OSM visited us a week or two ago along with ODNR. They are excited about the project. DNR wanted to share that although within our budget we proposed to use the indirect for construction because we had that gap. It will automatically be considered indirect anyway so if there was a way for us to find an extra $300,000 of infrastructure money to support the project, we could potentially access that as indirect and keep that in our office for staff. We will definitely be doing that and keep you all in the loop as we work through that. We are expecting the grant award to arrive sometime between summer and fall so this will definitely be over winter environmental review and design and ideally start construction 2024.
* The ORCA POWER grant is progressing; we are working now with our branding stakeholders. Mainly the Ohio’s Winding Road and Visitor Convention Bureau to talk through a regional brand and how we going to complete this component of the project. Which is developing signage conceptualize in 2021. It’s regional signage in multiple counties, like physical signs. I think we are back tracking that a little bit probably because of the pandemic and thinking maybe we should focus those funds on developing a website. That can be a regional asset and help plan their trip here. We already have a draft RFP for our website of the Ohio’s Winding Road website but what we are anticipating to do is before posting that RFP is to collect the region’s convention and visitor bureaus and stakeholders and really ask them what kind of thing would be beneficial for them and complement their work to get that stakeholder buy-in before we take some concrete action there. In light of that and because Ohio’s Winding Road works mainly with contractors we did propose to take over the management of the new website that would be upgraded. Again, we are going to start by engaging our stakeholders and getting that regional buy-in there. Everything else in the grant is progressing as one would expect.
* The 10-county recreation asset and development plan that we hired Scott Linnenburger to do out of Kay-Linn enterprises is something that we will kind of start back up and weave into conversations mainly around the ACG waiting to see how the Buckeye Hills planning process roles out. Planning to connect with Chasity there and kind of pick her brain on how we can coordinate these efforts in the best way possible.

* We were on a call earlier today with the National Forest Foundation and their mission is to really work with forests and find funding opportunities. They are aware of our project and have been for some time. They secured an investment from TC Energy, so I think its $150,000 and it’s going to coming to the non-profit. They have to have a non-profit grantee and we will be building the new Chauncey NICA connector and then 4 more miles of connections that gets to the 60 thresh hold.

* We did submit a National Forest Foundation Legacy Trails Grant for the Marietta Unit. We basically used what was in place for the Wayne funding for trail improvements there from the POWER grant as match for that. So, we requested an additional $100,000 for that.
* We just submitted a Matching Awards Program Grant to do enhancements of Depot and Bullfrog trail making those adaptive and making sure the adaptive standard is there. Unfortunately, we had some match committed that might be ineligible that we were hoping to use: the TC Energy grant to match the MAP; but that might not be possible. We will continue to pursue that and that is a priority for development.
* Still working on all of the tax recording and reporting there. The OU Economics of Altruism class would like for us to participate again and are really focusing on Chauncey this year. Hope to connect with folks in Chauncey and help to figure out what that might look like.
* Here’s the list of projects of the ACG grant that totaled $17.9 million and the match that we brought in from project partners. We did expand the footprint of the project based of the guidance from the state to include other assets. So, we have Stuart’s Opera House as an anchor tenant at the square. The Southeast History Center that serves as our anchor tenant that services the region in heritage and tourism. The Ohio Museum Complex to exhibit the Crane Hollow All Specimen collection. The Meigs County Pioneer, History, Society, and museum building which has design work ready. We added workforce components - which we had discussed previously - the emergency rescue and inclusive hospitality is what we came up with the Visitor and Convention Bureau along with the Athens Area Emergency Services. Southeast Ohio Art which would add the addition murals, sculptures, and Invisible Ground sites throughout the region. I added all the admin up for the ORCA managed projects, so hopefully that is enough for use to get a Director of Finance as we will need it.

* We have an infrastructure project consisting of purchasing this building and redeveloping it as a hostel, so we would have a place to host trail crews to do maintenance work. Then we would also rent rooms here to balance out the cost. We asked for an electric vehicle charger, solar heater, solar van, solar truck, and some more equipment and training. We got the Nelsonville-Doanville connector and culvert in there. The Snow Fork cost estimate includes things like a cell tower, expands the parking at the trailhead. Folks could park there for events and walk into the event center.
* We kind of already talked about this in the Financial Report, that’s kind of where we are committed contractually and theoretically already for the bike wash station. And then what we would like to do with the remainder of the funds. We would have to submit that alongside our reimbursement requests and then we’re locking in our scope of work. To do that I have spoken with the ODNR staff about this change and they’re fine with it.
* I think we are all in agreement to move forward with the Buchtel- Snow Fork Trailhead design and use any remainder to increase trail miles.
* In 2023 we are looking at some events we are hoping to be a NICA site and working to get that connection done as soon as possible for the Chauncey Trailhead. We are also in conversation with Peletonia this week; they will be here next Friday to check out Chauncey and the Snow Fork Event Center. They are hoping to have a gravel race here with 500 riders so that’s pretty exciting and would be high profile and really nice event. We are thinking of being partners with the village of Chauncey, ODNR, and everyone else to do a big celebration. We will be hoping to do a fall fundraiser this year and probably would heavily be a AWOADC project, looking forward to see how that goes as well as expand programs and our bike fleet to do the social return on investment piece.
* I should have started with this but you all probably have already met Delia Palmisano, our new Philanthropy and Communications Director. Delia is here and were excited to have her. I believe that the county is still working on all the ARPA agreements.
* Yesterday I presented with Dawn McCarthy and Seth Brown about conservation finance and how that aligns with what we all see as government benefits of wise land use and development. That was great there was 155 people on the call with the forest service as a result of that they’re doing a Baileys case study and contributed to those articles published by Cycle It Forward.
* I went to the Hocking Valley Scenic Rail thing; we talked about sending them some of our benefits out outdoor recreation templates to help them along.
* Before the holidays I connected with the Wood County active transportation committee about the ARC ARISE opportunity and still look forward to pursuing that.

**Maintenance Report:**

* Elle Dickerman, We wrapped up the year with not so great weather, but people coming out for volunteer days. Our largest one was with the Ohio University ROTC, they were awesome.
* Trails are now closed to mountain bikes; they closed on January 2nd. During this closure we are still having volunteer days. Trying to get some group organization days on the calendar for spring. We also have special permits for Winter Trail Monitors. We did a training with them early this month in January with them. We also shared a 2022 volunteer feedback survey. We are putting together an annual report to overview everything that has happened the past year and include that feedback in there.
* Steve Patterson, So, volunteer hours and how it equates and how you monetize that, I’m getting about $45,000 plus. It’s $25 an hour for volunteers, so that’s notable as well in terms of return on investment form the volunteers.
* Elle Dickerman, The Wayne uses the value of the volunteer hour, as $29 an hour so our 2022 is about $60,000 of value from the volunteers.
* Steve Patterson, So, this is somewhat related, the City of Athens received our funding from One Ohio which is the opioid settlement which has to go towards programs that are for people in recovery. MPP has discussed this in the past but not recently discussed pooling those settlement moneys together. I would like someone to take the lead in figuring out a program for persons in recovery and the trail maintenance world. I think that would be one of many good uses of some of this settlement money.
* Lenny Eliason, They are still dealing with getting the foundation set-up. We are waiting for the foundation to appoint a director. Then the settlement dispersants will begin to be sorted out. So, everyone is waiting from that stand point.

**Communication Report:**

* Delia Palmisano, I have taken over most of the management and posting on social media channels. In the last 45 days Facebook is up 21, so were at 4,100 followers the reach is 1,800 in that timeframe. Instagram, I have set-up a link tree in the bio so it’s easier to connect to the website and sign-up for volunteer days. Followers are 2253 up 35, reach is 2457. The top post for Facebook and Instagram was about the pump track which I thought was pretty cool. It really shows how folks are excited about the amenities. That post showed an increase in traffic of 347% just in the particular post.
* I have been doing an informal audit of social media channels. Twitter is the lowest, previously it was posting the same post on all three channels. Now I’m looking at how we can improve that going forward. Definitely open to suggestions to other social media channels.
* Other projects I have been working on would be the ORCA website. It was under construction prior to me starting and I think it kind of sat there so I am actively updating the content. Once we have all of that up to date and we all looked at it I want to do some informal user testing makes some final tweaks. The goal is to have that launched hopefully by the end of February. So that will be a good thing to check of the list and start promoting ORCA the brand as well as the Baileys.
* Outreach and other communications projects, I think most of these have been touched upon. We have the holiday card, ACG grant, QR code.
* We plan to meet Jay Edwards and some other people on February 13th to pitch the ACG.
* Next project will be the membership cards, and stickers. We will probably have a campaign in February around that. Jessie mentioned the POWER grant and I have been working closely with the regional brand and marketing sub-group to work on that website and redesign RFP and then take it to stake holders and CVB’s and see what the appetite is to invest in the regional brand. We created a new domain so everyone has the same email address.
* Amy Renner, The regional brand came up lot in ACG conversations with communities I was talking to, that came up quite a bit. A lot of people will latch on to that.

# Public Comments

NONE

**Motion to Adjourn: Lenny Eliason, Second: Tim Warren; *Approved*)**