



Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia Meeting Minutes

May 23, 2024, 3:00 PM - 4:00PM

Prepared by Haleigh Jankowski, info@orcaohio.com

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

Others Present: Jessie Powers, Elle Dickerman, Chloe Challacombe

Meeting Agenda

- Approve Agenda
- Approve March 29, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Director's Report
- Maintenance Report
- Communications Report
- Public Comments
- Other
- Adjourn

Meeting Call to Order, 3:04pm, Amy Renner

(Motion to approve amended agenda: Tim Warren Second: Tom Cangemi)

(Motion to approve March 29th meeting minutes: Tom Cangemi; Second: Jay Kline)

ORCA Board Member Updates

Amy Renner: We had a community trail celebration and it was fun. We had a lot of people there. We sold out of all of our hot dogs- 100. That was our second annual and we are hoping to make that an annual event, in collaboration with ORCA.

Getting lots of questions about construction. The upcoming closure is going to be right here at the intersection 13 and 682. Trucks will be rerouted onto through 78. It'll be from June 3rd to July 3rd for our sew line replacement. There will be lots more closures, so if you guys are getting questions now, you have the information.

Tom Cangemi: It's a big thing. EPA is probably really happy with you.

Amy Renner: EPA brought a lot of money to the table to help.

Also, Chauncey was selected for the Appalachian Community grant, which will be a two million dollar investment for Converse St. improvements- between Sycamore and Mill St. It's part of our downtown revitalization work that we're doing. It will add parallel parking spots,

and accessibility on crosswalks, electricity for decorations, benches, trash cans, flowers. I know that we're in limbo in this building, but I was going to reach out to Integrated Services to see if they wanted a mural at the end here, because we've got enough funding to do several.

Jay Kline: I have a couple updates. One being that we're still waiting, but we're on the house bill two, for a hundred thousand dollars. It's in the Senate committee. Hopefully that comes out of the Senate committee soon, and then we have a hundred thousand dollars for our park. With that, we're trying to do a park revitalization day and I want to lump it in with the beginning of construction for the trailhead.

The York Township Fire Department's going to do a fireworks display for us. We're going to invite Jay Edwards. The Nelsonville York School Board, they've been involved with this and our superintendent, just a lot of people trying to make it one big event. I'll give you more updates on that as it gets closer and finalized.

Jessie Powers: That sounds great. I would love it if we had a contract awarded on that project by August. As this is where we receive jurisdictional updates, is there any progress on the county's budget? With the city of Athens, they're rolling forward legislation, to authorize payment of the membership dues, once their cash reserves reach 9%.

Charlie Adkins: As you were told at our board meeting, we do not at this time. I'm not for sure the city's going to pay their dues this year because, as you just quoted, until they get to 9% and they're at 6%. I'm not for sure what's going on there, but at this point we do not have the money. The question is, what's the difference between the county and the city?

Jessie Powers: There's no difference in terms of the bylaws.

The financial report for this month is not complete, and will be provided at a later date.

Directors Report

Jessie Powers: This is what I prepared for last month. There have been new updates on the conversation, but I think the point remains the same. The big takeaway from all of the conversations is that according to the ORCA bylaws, membership dues are due in January, which I think was just an arbitrary date based on the template that we used to update the bylaws. We would like to move that deadline to be the way that it would work best for the city and likely the county, I'm assuming, as revenues are brought in throughout the year, so their January shortfall might have an opportunity to be resolved by a later date. I have asked Auditor Hecht to provide advice around what that date should be.

The Appalachian Regional Commission grant, the ARISE Project, this is our planning grant, that was awarded to our partner the Pennsylvania Wilds. The reason that we were able to work with them is because we took on new partners, which was an approved action of the board last May prior to the invitation to those counties to partner with us. That project is continuing to progress. The team has received the proposals for the first round of planning, which is going to be some market analysis around app development.

Additionally the Pennsylvania Wilds team visited here in April. It was nice to show them some of what the region has to offer. We started here in Chauncey with a ride, and then had dinner in Athens. They stayed at the OU Inn. The next morning we met here to go over the operations of the bike rentals, which is something that they're interested in potentially doing in their landscape as well. Then we went on to Hocking Hills, took a hike, met some ODNR staff and had lunch. Then we headed over to Shawnee, took a little bit of a tour of the opera house that's being renovated. Then took a look at the makers market there that's operated by Ohio's Winding Road. We met them in Marietta the next day and visited the Mound in the cemetery. We are headed to Pennsylvania in June, to do a similar tour around and learn from them. It's been really great to work with them already.

With partners through the POWER Grant funding for regional or collaborative branding is creating a request for proposals to get a contractor to develop a regional brand, which all the 18 counties Convention and Visitors Bureaus agree is the best use of those funds.

Tom Cangemi: The branding is important.

Jessie Powers: Yes, absolutely. When the planning grant's completed for the app, we will very likely need that brand. Already insights gained by the peer learning helped us prepare our Branding RFP. As a reminder ORCA invited 18 counties to partner, and the only county that did not join us is Hocking County. Scioto County resolved to join in March, which is great news. It means that ORCA's footprint encompasses every bit of the Wayne National Forest. SHocking County did not join, which was a commissioner decision that went against the advice of their Chamber of Commerce and Convention Visitors Bureau Directors.

Tom Cangemi: I remember some of that conversation from earlier, what was the underlying issue?

Jessie Powers: I think it's really just a lack of comprehension of what we're trying to do here and best practices in rural sustainable tourism economy development. They feel we're trying to steal their tourists, which I'm certain already cross county lines on their visits.

The ODNR AMLER grant finally got the full contract wrapped up early this year. We were waiting to hear about the Appalachian Community grant awards and if we were going to be receiving some funding that would have supported this hub development. Unfortunately, we did not receive funding, so that is disappointing. The hub site is already part of getting a phase two assessment through Brownfields grant program with the Buckeye Hills and the Village of Chauncey. We should hopefully get those results soon, which would then allow us to keep moving forward. We can go ahead and start trying to secure contractors for design soon.

I did talk a bit about the POWER grant and the regional brand piece. The other piece is the outdoor recreation assessment and plan that is still in development with our consultant. With the POWER grant and the new partnership and everything that we've had to do, as well

as the construction activities that match the POWER grant, the Buckeye Trails 100 Mile loop development out in the Burr Oak area and \$2 million ORCA state of Ohio investment construction projects, require a grant extension. I would also like to request a grant extension for the programmatic side, which would give us another year to build, to plan for Ohio's first Outdoor Recreation Economy Conference.

We're thinking about July of 2025, so we have a much broader window. We have more opportunities to see exactly what we can do with that component. I request board authorization to request an extension to ORCA's 2021 POWER grant.

Tom Cangemi: I'm curious about what issues there were? Were there contractor issues, weather issues? What was going on?

Jessie Powers: In addition to Covid related cost increases, the Buckeye Trail project has been tied up with bridge issues and bridge design, because part of that loop is going through the National Forest. We've constructed all the trail miles that we're going to be doing with that capital budget. ORCA's remaining budget is set aside funds to cover design costs for the Buchtel trailhead, which is underway right now, as well as a bike wash, and some utility extensions at the village of Chauncey.

Tom Cangemi: Who's doing all the engineering on this? What firm do you have doing all that?

Jessie Powers: For the Buchtel trailhead? It's BDT. We'll still have to secure the design for the bike wash as part of the hub design.

(Motion to approve an extension of the ORCA 2021 POWER grant: Tom Cangemi; Second: Jay Kline)

Jessie Powers: The Appalachian Community Grant program 2022 partial award, one of the four projects the board selected to utilize that funding for is first responder equipment and training. We're waiting on one more training quote to go to Chief Rymer, who's then going to package this up. We're going to get all the signatures of the impacted first responders in agreement prior to purchasing equipment.

Project number two is the development of the Buchtel Snow Fork Trailhead upon design completion we'll be bidding that out for construction, and number 3 is contracted Baileys trail construction. The fourth component project, we were going to purchase this building as phase one of the Baileys hostel project, which was submitted in our 2022 Appalachian Community Grant. What we wanted was about \$1.5 million to transform the space into a hostel that would provide accommodations here in Chauncey.

Tom Cangemi: Do you own the building now?

Jessie Powers: No, we rent the building from Integrated Services.

Tom Cangemi: Didn't we vote for you to purchase the building?

Jessie Powers: We did, you're right. We authorized a \$280,000 budget for that. Then FEMA changed the floodplain maps to where this building elevated at the current FEMA map, but will be changed to be in the floodway. If we can't resolve this issue that I've already spoken to the Integrated staff about this to see what options might be available. If there's no resolution possible there could be a potential for us to use the \$280,000 budget on a different project or at a different location. I and the team are still investigating options, and I don't think we need to take action on it today.

The events approved at the March meeting, those are the Baileys Dirt Fondo, Pelotonia, they've changed the date. We're excited that they're going to come this year, they are planning to pay \$5 per rider to the nonprofit this year. Then we've got the gravel challenge lined up and Run Baileys. I'm not certain that we're having the Run Baileys event at this time. I know that it's a tough one for Michael Owen to get into his schedule, and I have not received an update.

This year we are piloting working with short term AmeriCorps members for the summer. We've hired three. They are overseeing two to three summer youth employees from HAPCAP.

Jessie Powers: The finance administrator position is posted and live. Applications are due at the end of the month. We've received four applications to date. We have replaced the finance director position with a finance administrator position. The difference between the two is that the finance director was always intended to do long-term projections, help with strategy, create an operations plan and budget for the new hub facility, which the last director didn't do and was not honest about not doing..

Tom Cangemi: I know it's past the fact, but just a question. Could you keep the position and contract it out?

Jessie Powers: We did investigate. I talked to MS Accounting to see if they would do our administration for us, ultimately they said no because it would be too much work and like they were adding another salary. They don't do the public type things, so the finance administrator position vs director is a cost savings.

I submitted an application to receive an economic recovery corps fellow. That was a new program that was created by the EDA and the International Economic Development Council. There were 500 sites across the country that applied to receive one of these fellows for a period of two and a half years at no cost to the organization. There were more than 1,400 applicants for the 67 fellowship positions. We are one of the fellow sites. We now have Jess Leibson, as Economic Recovery Corps fellow matched to ORCA. Fellows are mid-career level professionals that have a background in economics. Jess has a master's degree in economics and community development. She's worked for multiple Fortune 500 companies, she also

has a background in state and local government. So we're really excited to have her on our team.

Monday was the Economic Recovery Corps Conference in Washington DC. I went to that. Hosts were invited for day one of that conference. I felt it was important for us to go as we look for funding for our work.

I sat next to an Environmental Protection Agency employee on the inter federal government interagency team for coal impacted communities.

Charlie Adkins: I want to talk a little bit, before Zach left, I met with him to see what was going on, the finances, see what he did.

Jessie Powers: It was after he had resigned, right? I don't know why you wouldn't haven't involved me, his supervisor, in the conversation.

Charlie Adkins: Well, as a board member, I'm going to do what I need to do and if I need to find something out, so I'm going to go find out.

Jessie Powers: Why wouldn't you ask me first, Charlie? If I had a question about you or the county, I would ask you first.

Charlie Adkins: Anyway, I met with Pat Smith, CPA, there's CPAs in this county that do this work. I checked with him, showed him all the finances that I had.

Jessie Powers: That Zach created?

Charlie Adkins: Yeah.

Jessie Powers: Do you understand that there is some discrepancy in Zach's understanding of what our finances are and how to use various grants and public funds?

Tom Cangemi: What was the outcome, Charlie?

Charlie Adkins: I figured what a part-time position based upon the job posting that went out to the public. It's going to cost somewhere around \$51,000 for the healthcare PERS unemployment. We're talking about \$51,000 for a part-time person. After meeting with a CPA, he believes the high number for his company to do it is \$24,000. He thinks it's more like \$20,000. I think as a board we should look at CPAs in this county and if they can do the work?

Jessie Powers: That's interesting. I had no idea. I would love to have gotten that quote or had that been part of the conversation in March.

Amy Renner: We talked about this at the last meeting in March. You weren't at that meeting Commissioner, but I think if Jessie had known that, she certainly could have reported it to us during that meeting. We did talk quite at length about the position and restructuring it and

what our options were. From that meeting we came up with the action, which was creating this finance ad hoc committee to hire this position. That's why the job has been posted, because we have a vacancy and it needs to be filled.

Amy Renner: Another part of the Finance Administrator position was some administrative responsibilities. I think there is a benefit to having somebody dedicated to us to offer, more than just the finance piece. We were thinking more like the fiscal officer position that we see in the villages. I think there's a lot more benefit that having a staff member could provide than a consultant.

Jessie Powers: If you have that information, that's the information I want to do the job. I'm trying to do the job as best as I can. I didn't know that another CPA was willing to give us a quote.

Charlie Adkins: And I would've done it in March if I'd been here, my fault. The reason he resigned prompted me into looking at this because he claims the job is about seven hours a week.

Jessie Powers: He was an insubordinate employee, not performing the full scope of his responsibilities, and not being honest about his workload among other things.

Tom Cangemi: Forgive me for asking this question, is that crucial? Do you think saving that much money is worth the effort to retract the offering of a position to let a CPA do it? That's my question.

Charlie Adkins: I think we've got to look at both of them.

Jessie Powers: I've offered anyone to be on the hiring committee that would like to participate in weighing ORCA's options for financial services.

Tom Cangemi: I was a director of a major corporation, you look at this and you say, okay, you get \$600,000 coming to you and the private sector, that's called an account receivable. You can borrow against that as a nonprofit. That's future money coming. That's basically a credit coming in, so that's what I'm talking about with money. If you were in dire straits, that'd be the best option.

Amy Renner: Both options are offering us significant cost savings from what we were formally doing.

Jessie Powers: I'd like to see a real quote and make sure they have a good understanding of what our revenue streams are, because MS Accounting has been working with us for years and has the best understanding of our financial needs.

(York Township Trustee Tim Warren departs due to scheduled commitments.)

Amy Renner: Who is the CPA, can you forward Jessie your communication with him?

Charlie Adkins: I didn't get anything in writing. I wanted to come here to make sure you guys were okay to look at outside CPAs.

Amy Renner: Which one have you been talking to? Are there others you are aware of?

Charlie Adkins: Pat Smith and Tom's firm on Columbus Rd. I don't know about Nelsonville.

Sky Pettey: Would this be a contract that would have to be publicly bid?

Tom Cangemi: It would probably have to be. Whether it's a request for a quote or an actual proposal.

Amy Renner: It will be under \$60,000 a year, so we don't need to do an RFQ.

Jessie Powers: I'll just send the same email to everybody to get quotes.

Tom Cangemi: We're not trying to create more work, we're just looking for an option.

Jessie Powers: I really appreciate any help that gets us to the right solution. That's what I want too. Please feel like you have an open line of communication with me, I'm here to do the job as best as I can and open communication with the Board via email outside of meetings will save everyone a lot of time.

I need to create a new process to be reimbursed. Since we don't have a finance director position, I don't know if we just need someone else to approve my reimbursements, I think that would be the best thing that we could do.

Charlie Adkins: Are we going to do vice chair or chair? You don't normally get someone lower because you're their boss. So I can take the chair or vice chair.

**(Motion to establish chair and vice chair to approve ORCA Director reimbursements:
Amy Renner; Second: Tom Cangemi)**

Maintenance Report

Elle Dickerman: We had two pretty busy months with a lot of volunteer hours. Over 50 people attended in total each month. We're excited about that. Spring's a good time to do trail work. The ground is soft and it's pretty muddy.

We had quite a few events in March. Getting some people to come back for the second, third year in a row, which is exciting. Last year we did a prescribed burn prep volunteer day with the Wayne National Forest, which gave people an opportunity to participate in that process. We did a prescribed burn educational session where the fire manager Jason Bew sat down with whoever wanted to come in and ask questions about burns, which lasted the full time and longer.

In April a big event was Celebrate Trails Day, which was an event that the Rails to Trails Conservancy hosted nationwide. It was also Athens Beautification Month, which is the annual event Ohio University holds to encourage students to volunteer during the month of April. They had bus transportation provided from Athens, which is a barrier sometimes for folks to get out to the trails. It also was Serve Ohio Week, we had nominated an Athens Bicycle Club member for an award through Serve Ohio. Bob West, president of the bike club was presented the award for Southeast Ohio during that event. Next Tuesday, we'll have our first day with the three seasonal AmeriCorps members that'll be running the youth trail crew this summer.

(Motion to adjourn: Tom Cangemi; Second: Jay Kline)