

**Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia
Meeting Minutes**

January 16, 2024, 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Prepared by Chloe Challacombe, chloe@orcaohio.com

ORCA Board Members Present: ORCA Vice-Chair Mayor Amy Renner, Athens County Commissioner Lenny Eliason, York Township Trustee Tim Warren, Buchtel Council Member Jay Kline, Jason Reed Wayne National Forest, Nelsonville Sheriff (Not Present: ORCA Chair City of Athens Mayor Steve Patterson)

Others Present: John Stabler, Jessie Powers, Delia Palmisano, Elle Dickerman, Zach Bihlman and Skye Pettey

Meeting Agenda

- Approve Agenda
- Approve September 19, 2023 and October 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- Partner Updates
- Legal Updates
- ORCA Board Member Updates
- Financial Report
- Director's Report
- Communications Report
- Maintenance Report
- Public Comments
- Other
- Adjourn

Meeting Call to Order, 5:05 PM Amy Renner

(Motion to Approve Agenda and 9.19.23 Meeting Minutes and 10.17.23 Meeting Minutes : Tim Warren; Second: Jay Kline; Approved)

Partner Updates:

Jason Reed: Tomorrow we will be finalizing the pre-bid documents and getting those out for bid soon to be ready for the 2024 construction season.

Legal Updates:

NONE

ORCA Board Member Updates:

- Jay Kline: We're still working to finalize the footprint for the land transfer for the Snowfork Buchtel trailhead.

- Amy Renner: We finished our ODNR Nature Works Improvements, that included pulling out the sewage holder at the community park. We got a master water meter put in and a manhole. We're also really trying to figure out how to get a safe pedestrian and bicycle crossing into the park. We're looking for planning grants and are always open to suggestions. Improvements didn't qualify for any of ODOT safety grants because there weren't any car crashes. Commissioner, any updates from you?
- Lenny Eliason: Nothing new on our end.

Financial Report:

Zach Bihlman: December was a positive month for us. We got our first advance from the ACGP 2022 grant. So they did the 25% advance, which was a little over a million dollars for us. We were able to then have enough funding to pay off our line of credit, which was a huge plus because no one liked paying those interest fees. Our line of credit is currently zero and we've got around \$862,000 in the bank today. Obviously most of that is the advance for the ACGP that'll be used to fund all that construction.

I would like to ask, now that we're a little larger internally, if we can amend the employment reimbursement policy so that Jessie would approve any reimbursements for myself, I would approve Delia or Elle and Jessie. To establish a second party before any are being paid out.

Board Discussion.

(Motion to allow internal employee reimbursements up to \$500 and reimbursements are included in monthly financial reports: Tim Warren, Second: Lenny Eliason; Approved)

(Motion to accept the financial report: Jay Kline, Second: Tim Warren ; Approved)

Directors Report:

Jessie Powers: We were notified last week (January 10th, 2024) that the county does not intend to pay their ORCA membership dues due to budget deficits. That's problematic for us, as it's how ORCA is designed to operate per the bylaws. If the county does not pay their dues, then we're down to \$625,119 to cover our cost of ORCA including: staff Baileys maintenance, operation of the non profit social enterprises, grant administration and compliance etcetera. If this is to continue there's no line of sight on how we support staff and Baileys development and operations in 2025, if we can't rely on those revenues in 2025 and 2026. Current ORCA grant funded projects will take until at least 2026 to complete construction. Additional concerns are that the county and city's membership dues that cover a portion of my salary as the first person hired here, are match for the ARC grant. So if we don't have those revenues, I'm not sure how we comply with the grant as it's awarded. We will need to engage the ARC on that issue.

Amy Renner: Jessie, out of these sources listed, will the Wayne National Forest cost share be exhausted this year as well?

Jessie Powers: It should be, unless the agreement is renewed or it's rolled over, but we could easily use those funds this year.

Amy Renner: So the ARPA funds are the only one that was intended to be spread out.

Jessie Powers: Yes.

Amy Renner: So everything else basically expires this year.

Jessie Powers: Correct, and the POWER grant provided two years of staff support, but this is the last year.

Amy Renner: And with no dues from the City and County for this year operational revenue is \$535,119?

Jessie Powers: Yes. We also have to complete these grant projects awarded. For instance in 2022 ORCA expensed \$640,505 and was reimbursed. In 2023 we spent \$646,462 and have not been reimbursed, and can't request reimbursement until we finalize the scope of work for that funding sources. That scope of work finalization of the Buchtel Snow Fork Trailhead and that land transfer is underway.

The next project here is the 2022 abandoned mine land grant for the development of the Bailey's visitor Hub. We don't have a grant agreement for this project yet. With that AMLER project, the actual project cost of the Bailey's visitor hub is more than the 3 million. We had match money committed, the county committed \$250,000 of ARPA for that construction. Ohio Health gave us a hundred thousand dollars to fill that gap. Then ORCA or the AWOADC committed to paying the remaining roughly \$90,000. The AWOADC does not have that amount in their bank account anymore.

The next one is our Appalachian Community Grant, \$4,053,530, around \$100,000 for administration. This project invests roughly \$1 million to nearly complete the Baileys Trail System Trails, roughly \$2.7 million for the Buchtel Snow Fork Trailhead, roughly a hundred thousand dollars going to training and equipment for Baileys Trail System first responders. Then \$280,000 was approved for the acquisition of the ORCA Office.

If membership dues or organizational support won't last until 2026. It's in our best interest to figure out what to do regarding ongoing and pending projects. Currently, the Buchtel Snow Fork Trailhead design is under contract with BDTE architects, the Regional Recreation Asset Assessment and Development plan, POWER grant funded, is also. ORCA also accepted support from the Wayne National Forest, and the Buckeye Hills Regional Council to develop and expand that plan, which includes our new 16 partner counties.

In 2023 after discussion with the Board regarding the uncertainty for ORCA's best path forward in the 2023 Appalachian Community Grant (ACG) application process. Made the informed decision to disband being a lead applicant and support or partner with RCAP on their application. RCAP was asked to be the lead by Vinton County and other stakeholders for

smaller communities, and at a late stage in the application process ORCA negotiated the inclusion of many projects in multiple counties including Baileys projects and more than \$26 million of Athens County Projects. ORCA's team developed this overview plan, specifically, Elle and Delia made these maps and the final 50+ page document. We worked around the clock and made personal and familia sacrifices to make this a reality. We supported ACG submission of projects for every community that's an ORCA member except Butchel, which received ACG investment through last year's ORCA application.

The ORCA team has worked continually to secure funding to build acquire essential expertise to advance our work; ORCA grants have supported staff/Baileys operational costs in excess of membership dues since 2022. For example, RCAP's ACG grant if fully funded ORCA will administer several projects, Baileys, more mainly in Athens County, and those that are recreation specific and receive 3% administrative fees. This could provide additional operational revenue, but also additional work.

In order to plan for ORCA and the Baileys future, I need to know where the county and city stand, ORCA's founding members, stand on membership dues. If ORCA will not receive membership dues pursuant to the Bylaws. I look to the Board to amend the current bylaws to reflect ORCA's plan moving forward. Without Membership dues the ORCA team potentially only be employed for another year, and we'll need to figure out what that means for each grant supported project with each funder, operations of the Nonprofit's social enterprises, our partners, and operations maintenance of the Baileys.

ORCA was selected as one of 55 sites, out of more than 500 that applied, to receive one of 65, out of more than 1,400 mid-career level economic development professionals applicants, to serve an economically disadvantaged area for 2.5 years as an [Economic Recovery Corps](#) Fellows. ORCA's Fellow is moving to Athens for 2.5 years on February 29th. ORCA's Fellow along with the ORCA team will continue to investigate and advance opportunities to make ORCA less dependent on membership dues overtime. However, we need to most accurately understand the level of commitment/ support the respective member jurisdictions are willing to provide, if not what's agreed to in the Bylaws.

The ARC Arise PA Wilds partnership planning application was approved by Ohio and Pennsylvania December 21st. It's likely to be funded by the federal ARC. That won't provide staff funding, but it does provide investment to help us determine how to develop a visitor platform to grow the region's economy long term.

Unfortunately FEMA is proposing a floodplain change in Chauncey, which would put the ORCA Office building and envisioned Baileys Hostel in the mapped floodway. Integrated Services is investigating implications of this proposed change. ORCA's grant agreement includes purchasing the building as a phase one acquisition.

We have invited 18 counties to join us, and 16 have joined to date. I reached out again to Scioto County and made them aware that the original additional marketing support dollars aren't still available, but as they are a Wayne National Forest County we'd like to provide an additional

opportunity to Partner. I will also reconnect with Hocking County. Scioto County Convention and Visitors Bureau has indicated that they would like to join, but that's not the county's final decision.

The bottom line is I and the ORCA team are looking forward to hearing from the Board as to how ORCA operations are supported moving forward. During the County Commissioners Meeting discussion of ORCA Dues payment I heard Lenny mentioned potential contingency fees that could be used to pay ORCA membership dues.

Lenny Eliason: I wouldn't get your hopes up. We had to cut \$490,000 and we cut our contingency money down to \$130,000 for the entire budget.

Jessie Powers: For a year?

Lenny Eliason: When you're talking about a \$20 million budget, \$130,000 in contingency is not a lot of money. We had to cut job and family services requested for their mandated share to increase. The next biggest item as far as things that weren't required of us either from office holders, was the ORCA dues- \$90,000 dues payment, that's a large chunk. In the previous meeting, before we voted to expand to other people. I said, we should come up with a due structure that was a smaller amount for a lot more people to take care of that number, because that number wasn't gonna last forever. Unfortunately, this year is the year it really hit hard. When you look at our sales tax revenue, which is our biggest source of revenue, was only up 2% from '22 to '23, which meant \$200,000.

Our jail bill went up more than \$200,000. If our sales tax revenue exceeds later in the year, we could get a new amount of money. And we may have some money back in contingency where we could do that, but realistically, it's not fair for us to say we're gonna pay this due structure because we don't have it. Looking forward to the next few years, I think that's the same thing. You have a problem with just revenue from our side. When you're concentrating on two entities providing a bulk of a number, it's not good practice. It needs to be spread out in a smaller number over more people.

Jessie Powers: We can't provide the same services to each county with a staff of four. ORCA grants are already supporting ORCA staff and Baileys operation costs outside of membership dues.

Lenny Eliason: I understand that, but that's the decision that the board and the group's going to have to make because the county's not in a position to be able to fund that large dues payment. When you have a budget like ours, you can find \$10,000, you can find \$25,000 sometimes, but we don't pay dues to any organization that exceeds that number. That's the largest dues payment we make of any of the organizations we belong to. Most are between \$2000-\$6,000. You can't have an organization that has one county funding it and 16 other counties belonging and not paying a dime.

Amy Renner: Yeah. But the direct benefit of all of this-

Lenny Eliason: All this is not the direct benefit of Athens County. Athens County signed up to do the Bailey's Trail system. That was what we started this on. That's how we said we were gonna do it. Then it got morphed out to start providing services to southeast Ohio.

Amy Renner: What are the services that are being provided to southeast Ohio?

Jessie Powers: They're all from the POWER grant, from contracted parties, the mission and vision was all agreed to by the board, and there was always the opportunity identified as a regional approach. Planning support via Kay-Linn Enterprises to create a plan for the region's recreation opportunities, making support from the POWER Grant budget line, inclusion in the service area for The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc. (PA Wilds Center) Planning grant from the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) (ARC) to work with partners to complete research, planning, and market analysis for a mobile platform that would accelerate the growth and value capture of rural place-based tourism sectors and their related supply chains. Without ORCA Partner Counties ORCA would not have been a good out of state partner for the "Mobile Platform Development to Advance Rural Tourism Economies" project designed to drive large-scale, regional economic transformation through multi-state collaborative projects across Appalachia. ORCA can't do what we do for the Baileys for 16 counties with our current staff, and 16 counties aren't going to pay ORCA membership dues if they don't even know who we are or what we do. ORCA's invitation to Partner Counties meets an opportunity for Athens County and ORCA Member jurisdictions to meet incredible opportunities. How do we expect other potential member counties to pay for services that may result in less outside investment? ORCA is capitalizing on the abundance of COVID relief funding that's available now to secure Baileys investments, but that funding won't be here forever.

Amy Renner: How long has the county known about this budget?

Lenny Eliason: The notification came up the day after we made the decision. The auditor didn't give us the numbers until that week of Christmas. So it's not like we waited to spring it on anybody.

Amy Renner: What about the benefit that the county gets from the Bailey's due to the sales tax and property taxes would be affected by this project?

Lenny Eliason: This project has contributed to sales tax very little. If you only had a \$200,000 increase, you can't attribute all that to the Baileys.

Amy Renner: What about the increase in property valuation?

Lenny Eliason: It has nothing to do with the Baileys. It happens to do with sales. You have to understand how property tax valuation is done. This is the three year triennial. This is the triennial update year, it has nothing to do with the Baileys.

Jessie Powers: I would argue that what most people list on any property for sale near the Baileys, is its proximity to the Baileys.

Jay Kline: To me, it seems like the commissioners and Athens County, by paying these membership dues, are supporting Doanville and Chauncey and Butchel and other small communities around here. I think that those communities are going to suffer with that loss. Am I right in saying also that the reason it's \$180,000 is because Athens city is tied to the county. when it comes to this.

Jessie Powers: Yes.

Jay Kline: I know Athens City is not as connected to the Bailey's as, Butchel and all these other places, but I do see that the commissioners are tied to this more because you're representing smaller county jurisdictions in this case. I understand that you're talking about budget shortfalls, and I'm sure that you looked at that very hard. Right?

Lenny Eliason: Yes. You want me to cut a sheriff's deputy so I can fund the Baileys? Do you want me to tell the auditor there's one less employee available? You want me to get rid of an assistant prosecuting attorney so I can fund the Baileys? Those are all choices we have to make.

Jay Kline: I understand those choices.

Lenny Eliason: Whenever you have a situation like this, you start with the things that you aren't required to fund. And this is one of the things we're not required to fund. The county made a three year commitment that finished up last year. We've put \$503,000 into this organization, a commitment for another \$250,000 in this organization. That's a lot of money. The \$500,000 that came outta ARPA could have actually went to fix county buildings that we don't have enough money to fix.

Jay Kline: And we appreciate it. We appreciate it in Buchtel, we appreciate it everywhere. So you've looked at this really in depth, and I can see that. Do you have any ideas? Do you have any ways going forward with, not just with the commissioners, but us as a group here?

Lenny Eliason: I think that's something the group's gotta sit down and talk about.

Jay Kline: I agree with that.

Amy Renner: Chauncey has been really diligent to capitalize on this project in every possible way. That is a huge benefit to the county too. We've been trying to be responsible about that opportunity and make some real serious infrastructure improvements. And those are things that down the road, it's just going to improve the quality of life for our residents. We've got a lot of businesses that are in the works right now, and that's really exciting. There's a transformation

underway. And I'm really proud of how quickly the Baileys has evolved already. I think it's really remarkable how much has been done in only three years.

Jay Kline: You guys are like a flower blooming in the desert right now. That's why we've been chasing you guys the whole time trying, so we can do the same with Buchtel.

Amy Renner: A lot of it's been because of this fear that one day we won't have it anymore. We're trying to get as much done for Chauncey as we can. And it does feel really scary to see this deadline and just be unsure of where it's headed.

Jay Kline: I think that we just have to be able to sit down and figure it out, because we can't miss this opportunity going forward.

Jessie Powers: A council of governments was by far the hard way or more unique way to develop the Baileys. A parks district, you could put a levy on the ballot, but there wasn't the political will to do that. So the county and the city Chauncey, York Township and City of Nelsonville agreed to found this council of governments. And now here we are, and have been wildly successful, but we need some real support to continue to do this work.

Amy Renner: I think part of the appeal for the Baileys is how well it's maintained. That's one of the biggest compliments that people who go on those trails tell us. And I know how much work is put into maintaining those trails. I really think this property is in jeopardy, the quality that you've been maintaining so far, and keeping up the momentum that it's gained.

Jessie Powers: Who maintains the Baileys if ORCA doesn't have employees?

Lenny Eliason: That's not really the county's responsibility. That's ORCA's responsibility. That agreement is between the Wayne and ORCA.

Amy Renner: We're here as ORCA today. What is the suggestion for how to sustain ORCA?

Lenny Eliason: I don't know. What's your suggestion? How do you sustain ORCA? Don't look at me.

Amy Renner: You're here just as equally as I am. When you came up with a \$90,000 membership fee, what did you have in mind for the future?

Lenny Eliason: The county and the city never committed for the long term. We told ORCA they had to become financially independent. That's what the concept was. The concept was to provide seed money, not sustain it.

Jessie Powers: Three years is not a long time. In three years, the ORCA board has changed how the state of Ohio sees and invests in rural infrastructure. We've secured funding to grow

our organization, we've created a partnership with 17 counties in Southeast Ohio and set up revenue generating social enterprises through our nonprofit that aren't yet profitable.

Lenny Eliason: I think you're all missing the point.

Jay Kline: You don't have the money.

Lenny Eliason: We don't have the money.

Jessie Powers: Then is a parks district, a solution that the board would be willing to consider. Because the Board are the vested partners in this. How can we solve it?

Lenny Eliason: I can't see a Parks district providing the vision of southeast Ohio in a parks district in Athens County, and the citizens of Athens County voting for that.

Jessie Powers: You don't think that citizens of Athens County would vote for someone to maintain the Bailey's?

Lenny Eliason: To maintain the Bailey's is one thing. But, as ORCA is constructed today and planned to be constructed, I think that's a hard sell.

Amy Renner: He's going back to the perception that we're regional, not county.

Jessie Powers: There are no tangible infrastructure benefits in any other county that ORCA is providing. Athens County and City and member jurisdictions are seeing a more than \$9.1 million unique one-of-a-kind asset that will generate revenue annually in perpetuity.

Lenny Eliason: How much time are you spending in other counties versus philanthropic fundraising?

Jessie Powers: Not much at all. We haven't even started up a new advisory committee fully.

Lenny Eliason: How did you reach out to all these 16 counties that joined ORCA?

Jessie Powers: We have a Doodle poll out now to establish a monthly one hour Zoom meeting.

Amy Renner: This partnership structure was the attempt to find new members by learning about the projects that they have. That's how the Baileys started right? A group of people really passionate about something. Until we have new projects to really justify somebody becoming a member, which was the whole point of ORCA's founding by Baileys beneficiaries. I do think that was in an effort to think about the future and the direction that ORCA was headed in, it wasn't to redirect our staff's time to non-paying members. It was to build for the future for new members. Knowing that Bailey's wasn't going to be the forever or only project.

Jessie Powers: Also to build the Baileys as planned if we had all the money up front would have taken at least three years to build out the Bailey's Trail system. The County didn't select that method to build the Baileys. Instead and also in three years, ORCA secured all the funding and is still working on building the Baileys Trail System. We need to develop a plan this year to create a plan for 2025. To find grant funding every year for all of our staff Baileys operational costs isn't a sustainable way forward.

Jay Kline: So our shortfall right now is the \$180,000

Jessie Powers: Most likely. Mayor Patterson indicated he would be willing to ask counsel to change the legislation.

Amy Renner: But it's also jeopardizing these grants where that has been committed as the match.

Jessie Powers: Correct. Also, do we accept more grants if we don't have a clear line of sight of any organizational support past this year? I don't know what to do. Council of Governments are created and supported by its members and I realize we have limitations. ORCA isn't a nonprofit that I need to manage better, but a Council founded to deliver mutual benefits to local government and constituents or citizens.

Jay Kline: Well, we're not gonna solve it tonight, are we?

Lenny Eliason: No. But the \$180,000 deficit we have to think about how to do it.

Jay Kline: Yes. Can we have a meeting to just discuss this issue? Because it's pretty important when you're talking about perhaps your existence.

Amy Renner: Do you guys foresee this budget shortfall, carrying on? Is there any optimism that could restore the membership next year?

Lenny Eliason: I don't want to hold that out. That's not going to happen. Clearly if the money's there, we would do it, but the money's not there.

Amy Renner: It's really unexpected. I wasn't sure if there was something in particular that caused it for just this year.

Lenny Eliason: No. We have to live within what the budget commission gives us for revenue.

Jay Kline: My suggestion is that we set a meeting where we see if we can't figure it out. Lenny, you talked about a due structure, which I don't know how that would go along, but do you have any ideas of what that might look like? I'm very, very committed to finding a way forward here. I think we all are.

Lenny Eliason: I can give you a couple outlines.

Jessie Powers: We did get a legal opinion a couple years ago that ARPA funds could be used to pay dues. Does the county still have ARPA?

Lenny Eliason: No. We have a \$3.5 million project that was supposed to be 2.9 million. Heating and air conditioning in our buildings. That's what we have set aside for it. So we can't even do that whole project.

Tim Warren: I think we need to set a meeting because I don't see any good sitting here trying to beat \$90,000 out of the county when they don't have it.

Amy Renner: I really feel for Jessie having to go through this every year. And I'd really like to think longer term than just, what's the bandaid? I don't like the idea of hiring staff and not committing to supporting them.

Jay Kline: I agree with Amy as far as the long term, but we also need to think about the short term.

Jessie Powers: Has the county raised their sales tax? Are you guys at max?

Lenny Eliason: We're at max.

Amy Renner: The Vinton County Parks district that they created, was that through a levee?

Jessie Powers: Ohio Revised Code dictates how these districts are created, but the parks district can have a levee on the ballot. A council of governments can't, But I believe Parks Districts also maintain all the recreation assets in the whole county.

Jay Kline: A countywide levee is hard.

Amy Renner: I've had a lot of communities reach out to me since our park was revitalized to ask, how did you do this? It's amazing. Give me all of your secrets. My secret is ORCA. I do see how much it really matters to people to have a good park and maybe a parks district is something that we could look at. If that means that all the communities get that kind of attention on their parks, I think that that would be exciting for people.

Jay Kline: I think we're in consensus with the idea that we've gotta come up with some sort of meeting. I know everybody's busy. I don't think it needs to be at the next regular meeting. It probably needs a separate meeting with one agenda, one topic.

Amy Renner: Lenny, could we have a working meeting and have it be virtual?

Lenny Eliason: When you're a public body there's no such thing as a working meeting. It's a meeting. If you have a majority of the members, but our bylaws allow us to meet virtually, correct? Maybe we could make three people into a committee, not have a quorum and have a meeting.

Jay Kline: I nominate Steve.

Amy Renner: He would want to be on this committee. I can also serve on the committee.

Jessie Powers: Great. We've established a committee to discuss long-term ORCA operations. Members being Mayor Steve Patterson, Mayor Amy Renner and Commissioner Lenny Eliason.

Communications Report:

Delia Palmisano: Social media report: Facebook, we're currently at 5,056 followers. This time last year we had 4,103. So that represents an 18% growth rate, which is pretty much what you would expect in a year, for a good growth rate.

Instagram, we had a 13% growth rate. So again, in the range where you want to be.

Last year we started the Bailey's Trail Talk quarterly newsletter. Three editions have gone out. That started in April of last year. We're currently at 329 subscribers. Again, happy with that growth.

The ORCA website gets a lot less traffic than the Baileys website, but we had 147 site sessions in the last 30 days and 122 unique site visitors.

The Baileys website, 2,328 sessions and 1,703 unique site visitors.

Moving away from the communications, we have been thinking more about fundraising coming into this year. We did welcome a new sponsor last year, Webb Financial group, from Zanesville. Last week we had our Drafts for a Difference event, with the Sunrise Rotary. It was not great weather, but we had a decent turnout for that. We are working on revamping and a marketing campaign around the Baileys membership.

At the beginning of the year we're at 71 members and I'd really like to see that double this year. Trek was our sponsor for the Baileys Dirt Fondo last year and have a meeting set up with them next week to think a little bit more about long-term sponsorship and what that might look like.

Maintenance report:

Elle Dickerman: I can share some stats and highlights from 2023 We did a volunteer day with the local NICA Team, Cougar Bats. We had 35 people out. They want to keep doing more volunteer days, have team members take a regular day off a season and do some trail maintenance. Then we had our Dirt Fondo. We had 39 volunteers who dedicated 178 hours to help make that event happen. We hosted an AmeriCorps National Day of Service for Veterans Day. We also hosted Athens High School Senior make a Difference day again. We're getting into a rhythm of having these more regular annual days and groups who continue coming back, which we hope to continue building upon. For 2023 we're at 2098 hours for last year, which is growth over 2022, which was just about 1800 hours. A lot of volunteer hour organizations use the independent sector dollar amount per hour, which estimates the value of the volunteer

service. Our value for last year is \$66,724. Another number that has grown is we had 239 total unique participants in 2023. That's growth over 2022, which was 125 total participants. As we continue to reach these new groups, we get new faces out there. We had 42 returning volunteers, whereas in 2022 we only had 21 returning volunteers. We're going to do a volunteer thank you dinner this Friday and hand out awards to six people who contributed over a hundred hours in 2023. We're excited to move into next year, find some new groups, do more with the same groups, and continue maintaining trails. We have a lot more trails to maintain now than we did last year. So we need to keep growing in that regard.

Amy Renner: Thank you. Alright. Moving on to public comments.

John Stabler: I've known some of you for a while. I've been involved in politics for 25 plus years. I have tried kicking and screaming to drag people in Jackson County to what has gone on in Athens County over the years. 25 years later I finally got them to create a board of tourism by getting a couple commissioners that were willing to take the leap and getting them to realize the benefit of what our outdoor recreation is for southern Ohio and how we're not isolated as groups. Jackson County has benefited because of what has gone on over here. I appreciate the drive, and understand budgets are not fun for any of us right now. Hopefully there's a way to move this forward.

Amy Renner: Thank you. I really appreciate that. I do think it's a regional effort because the chances are southeast Ohio can't support tourism on our own. I think by creating a regional destination, we keep people around a little bit longer. I got invited to speak at the Adventure Summit next month. Only four trail towns were invited and Chauncey is one of them and I think that's pretty cool. We were the only mountain biking community that was invited.

I do think as you get the partners, it will be great to hear from them too. I would be interested to hear what fee structure or what services are the most appealing for them to seek membership.

I think if there's nothing else, I'll motion to adjourn.

(Motion to adjourn: Amy Renner, Second: Jay Kline; Approved)