

**Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia Meeting Minutes**

**March 29, 2024, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM**

*Prepared by Chloe Challacombe, chloe@orcaohio.com*

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

Others Present: John Stabler, Jessie Powers, Delia Palmisano, Elle Dickerman, Zach Jones and Chloe Challacombe

Meeting Agenda

- Approve Agenda
- Approve February 24th, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Financial Report
- Director's Report
- Maintenance Report
- Communications Report
- Public Comments
- Other
- Adjourn

**Meeting Call to Order, 3:34 PM Steve Patterson**

**(Motion to Amend Agenda: Jay Kline; Second: Amy Renner; Approved)**

**(Motion to Approve February Meeting Minutes: Tim Warren; Second: Amy Renner; Approved)**

**Partner Updates:**

NONE

**Legal Updates:**

NONE

**ORCA Board Member Updates:**

NONE

**Financial Report**

Provided electronically prior to board meeting.

**(Motion to accept financial report and authorize Director of Finance reimburse up to, but not to exceeding \$1,000 for travel :Steve Patterson; Second: Tim Warren; Approved)**

## Directors Report

Jessie Powers: Membership Dues. I recommend watching the March 11th, 2024 Athens City Council meeting of the whole. One of the council members had obtained an internal document only shared in person with the ORCA Board during last month's Board meeting. The document that was presented shape ORCA's RBDG application, budget and presented various hypothetical salary structures. The highest payscale listed, which was not what was decided upon by the ORCA Board, was referenced as it was accurate. During my 2023 ORCA Member presentation I alluded to "wiggle room and flexibility to receive Member Dues payment," which I intended to mean we have time to go through the required readings, which would take a minimum of six weeks. I was later told City Council tabled the discussion until August, which seems to have possibly been influenced by inaccurate information and interpretation of my comment during my presentation.

At that same meeting our new commissioner representative to the board presented some documentation of what were referenced as Board of Commissioner meeting minutes. I haven't received the full copy that he provided the council, but have requested that and suggested we discuss that at today's meeting. The commissioner stated he told me that three years is was the proposed time frame, which he alluded to mean three years is how long the county would support ORCA. However, the commissioner was referring to statements he made at a public meeting not the official opinion of the Board of Commissioners. The Commissioner suggests his comments at a public meeting were the director's responsibility to report that back to the board. I don't believe that I'm able to speak officially for Athens County, and they do have a board seat and are a signer on ORCA's Bylaws, which do not include a three-year timeframe for ORCA Membership Dues.

As you all know, even if ORCA had the upfront private capital to build the Baileys Trail System through the Pay for Success model, it would've taken three years to build that full trail system. We did not use that model and had to first find the funding. We've also found funding for more investment than just the trail system. A three-year timeline was never formally agreed upon, nor does it seem reasonable based on realities of the project's funding and construction.

ORCA Operations. I have scheduled Athens County's 2023 Member report for Tuesday. Despite my and Board Members requests in January and February at meetings and via email for insights regarding if the county intends to continue ORCA Membership past their 2024 Budget shortfalls, we still don't have any response from the county. This limits my and ORCA staff's abilities to plan appropriately and pivot to continue to fulfill ORCA's Mission and Vision. I will be attending the city council meeting on Monday in hopes of providing clarifications I mentioned earlier.

PA Wilds ORCA ARC ARISE. The Pennsylvania Wilds team will be here April 23rd through 25th and ORCA and ODNR staff will be traveling to visit them in June.

Partners. Scioto County resolved to join us on March 14th. We now have an 18 county coalition that is all contiguous. I still haven't heard back from Hocking County and plan to reach out. We are continuing to meet with the advisory committee to advance projects. The committee will advance a RFP to procure services using POWER grant funding to advance development of a regional brand. We're excited to have all county's tourism professionals willing to partner and guide this effort.

Events. If the board would like to make a motion to accept all these dates for the events slated for 2024: Baileys Dirt Fondo 10.12.24, **Pelotonia 9.28.24**, Athens Gravel Challenge 7.20. 24, Run Baileys- 8.10.24, pending each event host complete the full application process and all the requirements.

**(Motion to accept the proposed events: Jay Kline; Second: Amy Renner)**

Jessie Powers: Baileys Maintenance. ORCA will soon fill three summer or short-term trail maintenance AmeriCorps positions. We're piloting these AmeriCorps Members leading crews of two to three summer youth employees in partnership with HAPCAP that administers the summer youth program.

Amy Renner: Are those 300 hour positions?

Elle Dickerman: Yes, for the summer. A 28 hours a week position.

Jessie Powers: Staff. The finance Director, Zach has resigned. Through our correspondence he indicated he is willing to work a notice and in order to complete ORCA's Hinkle filing will work full-time, and then transition to part time status until we find a replacement. So he'll be receiving half of his pay, half of the salary rate for working half the time. He's indicated he's available until April 26th and able to extend that through the end of the summer if needed. In light of current funding challenges I recommend we reduce the scope and scale of the position to be a half-time accounting and administrative services with a salary of \$40,000 OPERS and \$400 monthly contribution that's an alternative to health insurance.

I would like to get authorization to repost this position at a reduced scope of work where we're really having someone doing data entry related to accounting and administrative tasks.

Amy Renner: This is for both ORCA and the nonprofit?

Jessie Powers: Yes. ORCA Bylaws dictate that I work for ORCA and the nonprofit, so all our staff do also. If the board would like, I can revise this and send it out electronically if you'd like to approve it before it actually goes out. If anyone would like to be on the actual hiring committee, we welcome that as well.

**(Motion to approve posting of Finance Administrator position pending review from the hiring committee: Amy Renner; Second: Steve Patterson)**

Jessie Powers: We have our Economic Recovery Core fellow, Jess Leibson, here in Athens and is coming online around mid-April. We are thrilled to have her here and look forward to working with her for the next few years.

Travel. North Central Appalachia Mountain Biking Summit in Pittsburgh, which will bring together \*Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, and New York stakeholders. Richmond Federal Reserve Investment Conference. This October in North Carolina there's the annual Outdoor Economy Conference. This year, the Pennsylvania Wilds team is planning to present about the ARISE project at the conference, and I would like for our staff to also attend. I'll be analyzing those costs to present to the board.

Grants. ORCA submitted the RBDG grant request of \$74,558. Around \$10,000 of the budget will support ACENet's work with businesses, another ~\$10,000 will be used for travel, supplies, and contract services. About \$58,000 will cover staff salaries/work. Match for the grant comes from ORCA's POWER grant and the remainder of staff salary costs.

**Maintenance Report**

Elle Dickerman: We had a good month in February with a lot of participation. Our regular maintenance events have really been filling up this spring. We had 25 slots in our monthly maintenance day this month. It was a Saturday, it was kind of cold, but we filled all of them ahead of time. Our March one filled up and our April one is almost full. We're trying to get a few more on the calendar, because there's a lot of demand for it. We had some people come in from Columbus, I think like there's something to be said for existing a little bit longer and putting the messaging out there over and over again. There are people who are on the fence about attending and they see it enough times and they say finally, okay, yeah, I'll go do that.

We've been sharing photos, which we hope helps the word gets out. Here's a little before and after. People were really excited to tackle this root ball. Sometimes when a tree falls in the trail, sometimes it falls and rips the trail up on the bottom of it. We've had a few of those to deal with this winter. Our winter monitors have been on top of it. We're pretty caught up on fallen trees this winter, which is great because it's the first season where we've had 58 miles of trail to maintain. Opening date right now is tentatively next Friday. We'll have to see what happens with some rain this week.

There are also the prescribed burns that are going on as conditions allow. The Forest Service burnt off of West Bailey Road, off of Big Bailey Run Road. They're hoping to burn off of Utah Ridge Road too. The Forest Service also helps us keep the trees off the trail when they burn, so that's helpful. We had a good event this March with them where we did public education surrounding prescribed burns. We had a session at the Wayne National Forest office that was

open to the public and everyone showed up and asked questions and that was really awesome. We'd love to do something like that again, because I think it's something people are really curious about. These firefighters have some real stories to share.

### **Communications Report**

Delia Palmisano: We're continuing to reach out to our various audiences. Social media stats: Facebook, we're up to 5,286 followers, up 230 from last month. Instagram 2,691 followers, again up 86 from last month. Facebook reached almost 13,000 unique visitors last month and Instagram reached over 2,000. We started an ORCA LinkedIn page, which is kind of slow to get going, but reaches a different audience. The quarterly newsletter went out on February 14th. We had 419 recipients and a 70% open rate.

We restructured our membership tiers for 2024. Previously, the tiers were \$25 for an individual, \$40 for a household, \$60 for an organization, and \$125 for a business. We felt like that was potentially discouraging people who were just an individual from possibly coming in at a higher level. We restructured it to \$30, \$50 and \$125 and changed the names. We then did a winter membership drive that ran for just under six weeks. We had 29 memberships, 19 of those were new and 10 were returning. This earned \$1,740 for the nonprofit. The average member spent \$60. To give you a frame of reference, at the end of 2023, we had 69 members for the Baileys, and now we have 92 active members.

The final thing that we're starting to get going on is the second annual Dirt Fondo fundraiser. We have a soft registration open to all of the previous racers. We haven't done a lot of messaging around it yet, but Elle has sent out emails to previous racers. We currently have 26 registered. Last year we didn't open registration until June. We had 111 participants last year, so I think we'll definitely see an increase this year. We also have a new sponsorship strategy around the Dirt Fondo. We're selling T-shirts this year and will generate additional profits.

Steve Patterson: We all recognize we are Jessie's board, so we're the advisors to Jessie on everything that ORCA administration does. Can we collectively come up with a day of the month, where we can go back to having consistent meetings?

Board discussion indicates the fourth Thursday of the month at noon works for everyone.

Elle Dickerman: I also would like to introduce Zach Jones to everyone. Zach's our intern.

Zach Jones: Hello. Nice to meet everyone.

**(Motion to adjourn: Amy Renner; Second: Tim Warren )**