

**Arizona Trail Association Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**March 7, 2020**  
**Superior Chamber of Commerce – Superior, Arizona**

Board Members in attendance: Steve Anderson, Ambika Balasubramanian, David Benson, Lisa Schnebly Heidinger, Fred Gaudet, Susan Lagerman, Vicki Levin, Rob Mason, Phyllis Ralley, Kent Taylor.

Staff in Attendance: Matthew Nelson, Executive Director

Board Members not present: Jan Hancock, Ben Murphy.

Election of Officers

A discussion was had about who currently serves as an Officer on the Board and Committee Chairperson, and who may be interested in serving moving forward.

President: Dave said he would continue or support someone new. The board agreed they would love him to continue as President.

Secretary: Jan has offered to continue; Lisa will help when needed.

Treasurer: Susan was a securities lawyer, and is comfortable reading financial statements. Susan agreed to serve. Rob said he'll be the chair of the Finance Committee.

Board Development: Dave said he did it previously, and started slowly, and then really enjoyed it. Board development is important because historic board members are reaching the end of their term limits.

Ambika offered.

Trail Operations: Kent has done a stellar job and he has agreed to stay.

Fund Development: This committee has been inactive. Steve commented that it should be reactivated.

Susan will take the lead on fund development.

Membership: Vicki agreed to help with membership committee.

Kent made the motion, and Steve seconded?

The motion carried unanimously, and a new slate of officers and board committee chairs has been established.

Dave said a common thread is that a past president remains during transition, and sometimes president-elect is brought in early. If we decide to redo bylaws we might want to consider adding that. Susan clarified, making past president an official position.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Susan moved to approve the meeting minutes from October 19, 2019; Steve seconded; and the motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

The Board went into Executive Session to discuss confidential Board and Staff personnel matters.

After Executive Session, Executive Director was invited to join the meeting. Board President briefed the Executive Director by informing him that the ATA has a full slate of officers and board committee chairs. He informed the E.D. that the Executive Session was productive, and that everyone has agreed to put the past in the past, and focus on the future.

Board Development

The Board Matrix was discussed. We are still waiting for two Board Members to complete the matrix, and will send electronic copies to all members of the board to see what skills and experience exist on the

Board and where we are lacking. Currently, it's clear we are deficient on finance, CPA, and geographic and cultural diversity. Dave will send everyone's term limits and expiration dates.

The ATA also has ad hoc committees and an Advisory Council. Phyllis suggests historic preservation as a committee. Both Phyllis and Susan are interested in participating. The ATA also has a Technical and Geospatial Subcommittee, led by the ATA's GIS Director Aaron Seifert. There's also a Gateway Communities Subcommittee. The need for a Legal Affairs Subcommittee has also been discussed in the past.

Executive Director says that the Gateway Community Advisory Council meets twice annually. If anyone wants to participate, you're welcome. Phyllis and Susan are interested.

President asks for a Cline Library update. Phyllis says there's a link online that's helpful to see what they're cataloguing and how it's described (essentially a table of contents of what is in the archive). After all the history of the Arizona Trail is properly documented and catalogued, it could make a great book. Rob says the Cline Library is an incredible facility, and all Board Members should take a tour when they're in Flagstaff. ATA did donate \$5,000 to the Library for management of the project – this funding was made available through our Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the US Forest Service. That was enough funding to pay one staff member to do most of catalogue and inventory.

Phyllis says she's trying to find ways to solicit stuff from families and former ATA members. Executive Director says most of what we know exists is already at the Cline Library, however four boxes Jan had gifted to the ATA were recently rediscovered. Those are being reviewed by a volunteer and the applicable documents will be transferred to the Cline Library later this year.

#### Board Development

President reminds everyone to help Ambika find good prospective board members, especially who can focus on financial development and/or a CPA. President will ask NAU if there's someone on staff interested in hiking and finance. We've talked about board diversity; male-female ratio is good, but diversity is so important. The ATA needs younger board members, and more cultural diversity represented. President says it puts the onus on us to replace ourselves with good people, because we're all leaving at some point.

#### Bylaws Review

Rob says we rewrote the ATA Bylaws five years ago and it was a long struggle. Fred agreed. Rob says lawyers looked at it and we haven't heard of any issues thus far. Fred says someone was concerned about term limits (no more than two 3-year terms) and his response was that the Advisory Council is always an option during a year off the board, and then you may be able to come back on.

#### Strategic Plan Update

The ATA's current Strategic Plan (2016-2020) needs to be updated before the end of the year. Executive Director says this plan was developed after a long process of almost one year to determine what's possible for the organization. It's very comprehensive and should be used as the model for the next Plan. Executive Director provides updates on what has been accomplished to date, what is in the works, and what will likely not be accomplished by the end of 2020. See attached "Strategic Plan 2016-2020 with updates" document.

President reminds Board we need a new Plan, and that it seems to be a board/staff function. Also, we have such good experience and knowledge from the past to put in place for the next one. Should we start a strategic plan committee? Ambika says good idea. Previous Strategic Plan committee was actually a working group. Rob says there were meetings in Tucson and Phoenix for input. It was board-driven, with

staff input. ATA also asked for input from other people. President comments on how much has happened and how much the organization has grown. President asks for volunteers for strategic planning working group. Fred, Ambika, Susan, Vicki and Rob will participate, with Rob as Chair

Fred says we should target the October Board Meeting to finalize the new Plan.

### Financial Report

Executive Director reports that almost \$400,000 been secured for the ATA already, and we have never been able to say that in March. The USFS funding has gone up, partly because we're doing more, and individual forests and districts haven't been applying for funding specific to AZT. Laura saw funding going unclaimed and redirected that so we can employ more conservation corps members to get more work done on the trail.

ATA also secured \$7,000 for Veterans Volunteer Trail Work weekends (4 weekends in 2020, engaging Arizona veterans to spend three days and two nights on the trail). Goal is to connect vets to outdoors and the AZT.

Former ATA Board Member Larry Snead passed away last year and named the ATA as a beneficiary of a portion of his estate. Funding will be used to support the Babbitt Ranch Singletrack Project.

The ATA's grant schedule has almost \$2.5 million to apply for. Executive Director will focus on grants; CFO will focus on private donors.

Ambika asked for information at a future meeting about how ATA raises money. Executive Director explained our general strategy is to keep funding sources diverse, so that no more than 20% comes from a single source in case money dries up.

### Draft Budget

Executive Director presents a draft Budget for 2020. Rob points out increases in office, storage, insurance costs. ED and CFO have worked on reclassifying many expenses to conform with our new Accrual accounting system. Accounts and classes have been more appropriately categorized, which is why there are big blanks in historic account categories. Big changes from 2019 Budget are income – of the \$370,000 in non-government grants, \$200,000 is from Rosemont Copper. We might have to return that funding since their project and associated trail improvements aren't likely to occur within the next 10 years. We can't put it in our profit and loss statement, because right now it's a liability, not income. This would put 2020 budget at a little over \$1 million.

Regarding salaries, ATA now has fewer people but more full time employees. Staff positions have been consolidated. For health insurance benefits, individual pays 50%, organization pays 50%. It's adequate insurance with low deductible and low co-pays. If we want to develop employee benefits packages in the future we can discuss it, but the ATA has gone from hourly contract positions with no benefits to a more professional structure over the past three years.

Rob moves to accept the 2020 Budget; Steve seconds; it's approved unanimously.

### 2020 Priorities

Matt says Trail Operations Committee commented on proposed priorities, and developed this list – which was published in the Annual Report. Beyond individual projects the two big standouts are trail ethics education and the next step is informing the general public on best practices.

Regarding issues with Trail Angels, a survey is being developed to assess level of engagement with registered Trail Angels. Ambika says we should do webinars or something to set expectations of how to Leave No Trace while caring for the trail and those who use it.

Executive Director says Beth Keune has been working with Leave No Trace in Arizona, and we will engage her to adapt traditional LNT principles specifically to the AZT.

Only big trail project that might be delayed a year is the Ripsey Wash Reroute. Asarco is going to dump excess mine tailings where the AZT is now (in Ripsey Wash). Now Asarco says it will need to delay the project a year.

Matt says Shawn is working near Sunflower, and phase one access point is almost done. He, Zach and Shawn did trail report. It talks about accomplishments and plans. Any questions? Ambika asks if there's a North Rim event again? Matt says yes. Fence building, kiosk, trail work. Adds Zach put together 2021 priority year for Coronado Forest, eight projects to be done then. If approved staff time will go to those.

Rob asks if we're making progress with the Coronado National Forest. Executive Director says yes; the new Santa Catalina District Ranger has shown a renewed commitment to cooperation. He thinks it will remain a challenge, but they recently approved installation of three gates on Oracle Ridge we've been requesting for nine years.

Fred asks if Temporal Gulch 32-mile project is funded with Rosemont money, and Executive Director says no. This project would eliminate 17 miles of paved and dirt to get 32 beautiful miles of trail. Waiting for final approval from US Fish & Wildlife Service re: project impacts on threatened and endangered species. All other cultural and biological studies are complete. Project can likely begin this year and will take up to five years to complete (\$1.2 million in project costs). Thus far, \$100,000 has been committed from the Arizona Trail State Fund. Executive Director intends to ask two mining companies for funding since their operations are why we're moving the trail. The Town of Patagonia would no longer have trail going through town, but trail users can still use the exiting trail to get into town for resupply if needed.

Ambika asks if there's anything happening in the Superstition Mountains. Executive Director says we have some projects just to keep volunteers engaged but because of fire impacts any significant work should wait three to five years until the landscape naturally stabilizes after the Woodbury Fire.

#### Legislative Updates

Full-funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been combined with the Restore our Parks & Public Lands Act into the Great American Outdoors Act. It's being introduced in the Senate and has strong bipartisan support. Please reach out to AZ Senators to ask for their support of the Great American Outdoors Act. LWCF funding could be used to purchase Arizona State Trust Lands to protect the AZT; and to purchase easements across private land. The Restore our Parks & Public Lands Act funding would help address the maintenance backlog on USFS and NPS lands.

Also, BLM received an additional \$1 million for national scenic and historic trails. Executive Director is looking into where that funding was allocated to see if it could benefit the ATA and/or the AZT.

Recreational Trails Program – many of the grants the ATA receives from Arizona State Parks is funded by the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). This comes from the Highway Trust Fund, which is funded by off-highway vehicle gas tax. The amount benefiting trails (motorized and non-motorized) hasn't been updated in over 15 years. The DOT says it doesn't have time to do a study to update the \$ figures, so members of Congress are saying either do the study or assume it's triple. If this is passed into law then the

amount of funds available to organizations like ours for trail projects could triple. More information will be shared if this is introduced as a bill.

Lots of bad news within the Arizona State Legislature. Two resolutions and two proposed bills are which very anti public lands. Two are direct response to LWCF. Arizona Legislature doesn't want the federal government to have any more land in AZ, so this new resolution would direct the State Attorney General to oppose all federal land proposals statewide. It's just a resolution, but not a law. The other opposes legislation that would limit opposition to federal law. There's another bill (HB2092, SB1046) saying any land owner who wants to sell private land to a federal agency must first get state approval. It has passed committee so has a chance of being heard. This is most unfortunate because it infringes on private property rights.

Some good news is that there are House and Senate bills to refund the Heritage Fund! We've been advocating for that for years! The ask is for \$10 million annually. Someone in State Senate prefers \$1 million annually. Historically, the ATA used Arizona Heritage Fund to fund trailheads and trail construction projects.

Executive Director will put together basic talking points along with numbers and potential impacts, and encourages all Board Members to reach out to their state representatives.

No news on Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act (this would make permanent the current 20-year moratorium on uranium mining near Grand Canyon) and protect the AZT from uranium mines on the south and north rims of Grand Canyon.

Fred mentioned he saw an ad thanks Senator Sinema for introducing the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act in the Senate, with ATA on it. He was concerned our organization's name is listed along with Center for Biological Diversity, Wilderness Society, and other extremist conservation organizations.

Rob asked Executive Director's opinion on Gary Werner retiring as Executive Director of the Partnership for the National Trails System. Matt replied that it's a good thing, and that the biggest change will be PNTS moving its headquarters to Washington DC. There is a national search underway for Gary's replacement, and that person will have an office and regular presence in DC – where we need constant advocacy.

#### Executive Director Report

Executive Director updated Board that positions held by Debbie (Membership & Administration) and Tamara (Executive Assistant) have been combined. Karrie Kressler is the new Administration Director. ATA has moved its office into the Historic Y. The new office has room for all staff in a historic building surrounded by 30 other nonprofit organizations.

Arizona Trail Maps – the Arizona Office of Tourism has funded the printing of 50,000 new maps, which promote the trail and have wonderful itineraries printed on the back. For itineraries, we intentionally omitted high-volume trailheads; they don't need more traffic. AOT is distributing them, and our Intern will be distributing them statewide.

BLM also printed additional copies of the Arizona Trail Junior Explorer Handbook. Most of them are going to libraries and schools. We have @ 10,000 in English and @ 2,000 in Spanish.

Rosemont Copper Project – it'll be years before there's movement on this project due to two recent federal judgements that the USFS and USFWS were derelict in their determinations the project won't negatively impact public land and threatened and endangered species.

Executive Director also learned that the Arizona Mining Association wrote to the Secretary of Agriculture recommending immediately suspending of all activities surrounding the USFS Comprehensive Plan because a federal advisory council was not developed. Forest Service Chief already approved plan moving forward without the FACA. It's important to know our "friends" within the mining industry are subverting the plan before it gets to a draft for public input.

The AZT been well represented nationally. Matt was a featured speaker at American Trails webinar where 600 people heard him sharing best management practices for minimizing conflicts between user groups. Our inclusive nature is lauded, and being used as a model for various groups.

State Land Department – the State Land Commissioner is not responding to requests about projects in Pima and Pinal Counties. The current commissioner is very adversarial to trails, rights of way, improvements, et al. We need to turn to legislators soon. Board members are welcome to come to these meetings at the State Capitol.

Arizona Trail State Fund – during the last FY, \$250,000 was approved to go to conservation corps. Half has been spent, and the other half is pending approval from State Parks (they administer the Fund). Executive Director wants to spend it quickly, and doesn't feel right asking for more if there is still \$150,000 left. He has a former ATA board member trying to plant the seed to make appropriation permanent with the Speaker of the House, which would be a major organizational success.

#### New Business

President reported that not much is happening with the John McCain Memorial Trailhead concept.

Kent reported on the Summit for Arizona's Trails. He and Shawn and Wendy were there. Wendy and Kent were on the steering committee; Wendy's idea to do statewide summit focused on trails since the last one was 12 or 13 years ago. NEPA clearance was a topic of discussion, and creative ideas were shared. Kent predicts action groups will be formed, with State Land being a major topic of discussion. Another Summit is in the works, with a discussion about a larger outdoor recreation presence in AZ. All our neighboring states have a cabinet-level position dealing with outdoor recreation, even New Mexico.

Through the Great Southwest documentary film – Executive Director reported on success of new film on the Arizona Trail with a focus on the ATA. If ATA had to pay for this, it would have been over \$50,000. The great news is that we receive all proceeds from screenings and downloads. It's invaluable. Huge thanks to Darwin Rakestraw and Outdoor Evolution for their time and talent in putting this together. If you haven't watched it yet, please do! You'll be proud. Vicki suggests summer screenings of the film. Vicki mentioned the Ivy League alumni council with 1,000 members in Arizona, and thinks it would be a good group to engage.

#### Future Meetings

Next meeting will be in northern Arizona on July 18. Executive Director will contact Cline Library at Northern Arizona University to find out about using the Special Collections Department as a meeting venue.

Fall Meeting is scheduled for October 17, and could be in the new ATA Office in Tucson.

Susan moved to adjourn, Steve seconded; unanimously accepted. The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Lisa Schnebly Heidinger.*