

**ARIZONA TRAIL ASSOCIATION**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**March 20, 2021**  
**10 am – 12 pm (held virtually through Zoom and telephone)**

Board Members Present: James Arndt; Ambika Balasubramaniyan; Jan Hancock; Lisa Schnebly Heidinger; Fred Gaudet; Susan Lagerman; Victoria Levin; Rob Mason; Phyllis Ralley; Bianca Salazar.

Staff Present: Brittany Chavez (Development Director); Matthew Nelson (Executive Director); Aaron Seifert (GIS Director)

1. Susan calls meeting to order at 10 a.m.

Thanked all for coming, re-emphasized value of being open to opinions and valuing diversity; celebrated the quality of staff and board, celebrated Trail having been solace through difficult year.

2. Vote to approve Board meeting minutes:

Jan asked for corrections on draft meeting minutes from October 17, 2020. Phyllis cited item 6, graph "Matt noted" requesting "his time" not him time." Rob cited item 10, p. 12, graph 3: mentor to Bianca, not Ambika; also second reference correction.

**Phyllis moved to accept changes; Rob seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

3. Jan next on agenda for certification of election results. Matt explained online ballot. This is first opportunity to certify results since it wasn't done at annual meeting. Explained the secure log-in system, adding State of Arizona requires 10 percent participation of eligible membership for vote to be valid. 266 out of 2160 total membership voted; James and Bianca new term received more yes than no, and Ambika on second term.

Fred asked why certification was necessary. Susan hadn't checked rules. But since we're here, why not? Phyllis added covering us through the switch from paper to online. Matt said the number of votes was similar, but online is easier, saves staff and mailing time.

**Lisa moved to certify; Rob seconded. Motion passed with one abstaining.**

4. Board committee reports:

*Executive Committee:* Susan:

Susan shared: This year we changed procedures for more check-in meetings due to feeling we weren't informed in advance of problems. Devised with Matt monthly check-ins. Matt does take good care of this; cited recent NYT article as example of us being aware in advance.

Committee also moved along on review and compensation committee with Ambika and took care of it; some meeting on strategic plan, which wasn't fully resolved but we're on hold due to changes in leadership.

Overall a better job is getting done on being more timely. Thanked members. "Our focus is: take care of the Trail."

Phyllis asked if we would have an opinion on the rehabilitation of the southern terminus due to border wall construction. Susan said the US government hasn't decided on future action; believes the construction backfired a bit but since no one knows future, an opinion recommending mitigation feels premature. Matt

agreed; added 60-day review ended but no one knows who did it so there's no opportunity for feedback yet. He'll let us know when there's a way to weigh in. Rob agrees to delay discussion.

*Board Development Committee, Ambika:*

Ambika shared: What we've been doing is review candidates; seeking a finance background, then trail operations background, then biking community. Had a strong CPA candidate but it didn't pan out. Matt has someone in mind with CPA background. Kaitlyn Boyle and Dana Ernst had preliminary screens and look great; Kate is out of state but committed to spring and fall meetings on-site and on Zoom in summer. Reviewed her qualifications. Ambika asked for input:

Susan said she sounds like a great fit as mountain bike enthusiast, nonprofit professional, and businesswoman.

Phyllis said a young person is a plus. Ambika added she hikes as well.

Fred had concerns about mountain biker from out of state, saying plenty are in state.

Lisa added out of state could be a plus, and they don't seem redundant.

Matt added Kaitlyn recently left Arizona for Idaho and has deep roots.

Bianca reinforced Kaitlyn's Prescott College roots.

Ambika added that she talked to Christian Maldonado and he's interested but doesn't have the strengths we currently seek, and that Stewart Koyiyumptewa has reached out again and asked Matt to speak.

Stewart is the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Hopi Tribe. He did a birthday Facebook fundraiser for the ATA and raised almost \$500. Agreed that talking with him further to assess his ability to devote time to the Board would be good; tribal representation would be great.

Dana is Flagstaff resident, also a mountain biker and hiker. Ambika would like more opinions on him. No votes yet.

Rob said Kaitlyn's background is impressive, and national involvement on the Board could be valuable. He didn't see Dana as strong option. Matt liked his Flagstaff representation since the current board is almost entirely from the Phoenix area.

Susan asked for number of seats coming open. Ambika said currently five are open; next year three Board Members will leave due to term limits.

*Finance Committee: Rob*

Rob said he'd asked Matt for follow-up on audited financials; he and Susan reviewed auditor's comments and Matt answered everything. Auditor did identify one significant deficiency – the person opening the mail also prepares and enters deposit. Matt says that normally, two staff members would open mail until Covid hit and staff have staggered in-office hours. The pandemic has made double mail inspection impossible, and since either he or Karrie opens mail, he has no concerns. Discussion followed.

**Phyllis moved to approve, Fred seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Next: 2020 Year End Financials (Budget vs. Actuals)

Rob asked Matt if budget was revised from mid-year for P&L Jan-Dec. 2020. It was. Rob commended Matt and staff for amazing results in difficult year. Rob said some reserves were spent in operation but we will recover.

Final financial report: upcoming budget for 2021. Rob asked Matt for comments;

Matt said last year trail ops were paramount, and that since there is such uncertainty this is a mimic of last year, and with great opportunities for federal funding, this is a good start. Great American Outdoors Act request may be approved, in which case he suggests revision since that could mean a significant amount of income for the ATA. Some discussion.

**Rob moved to approve; Ambika seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

*Trail Operations and Protection Committee: Fred*

Fred said: The Trail Ops Committee's biggest concerns are allocations of staff time and money. Matt has \$15K discretionary spending for smaller projects, but additional items necessitate committee input. The committee prioritized proposed projects for 2021. Safety first, then budget items or governmental support. Water is important. Big Dip alignment, Clear Creek were high priority. Location for rainwater collector is coming up.

Explained value of existing one. Enhancements three to five years out, steward maintenance also proposed. Fred talked about committee activity, asked for Board Member to lead this committee; and offered to mentor this year. Susan emphasized value of someone coming in now; asked if James would step up. James accepted. Fred said committee is strong; protection is an aspect of committee's work.

*Membership Committee: Vicki*

Vicki said committee is Karrie and herself; Karrie's efforts have been astounding; membership growth over 25 percent last year; she reaches out to current and past members. Susan and Matt help asking for re-engagement. Optimistic with Covid end in sight. Matt added efforts continue and value of trail in 2020 helped. Vicki added engagement efforts will continue. Susan added people need to know it's self-funding. Jan said a through hiker is blogging as example of recruitment.

5. Matt introduced us to Brittany Chavez, the ATA's new Development Director

Brittany said the German shorthair is also on the Zoom call; grew up in White Mountains, did NAU undergrad, law school, non-profit, AG's office; REI. Grateful to be on board after getting to overlap with Anna. Starting spring fundraiser tomorrow; working social media strategy. Matt added Brittany is incredible addition; they'd worked together when she was at REI and stayed involved. Brittany discussed her role at REI in answer to Rob's question.

6. Executive Director Report:

Matt said two documents support his report: 2021 priorities and organizational priorities, and brief report on past several months; asked for questions.

Fred asked if Brian Poturalski started as acting administrator; Matt said yes. Brian has five years until he is eligible for retirement and has more qualifications and skills than anyone to be the National Scenic Trail Administrator as he has seen every inch of Trail since he hiked, biked, rode and skied it in celebration of his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday many years ago.

Discussion of Southern Terminus rehabilitation as priority; will be revisited in June.

Jan lauded reports. Ambika liked balanced coverage of Matt's 2021 Priorities.

Fred asked when AZNST Comprehensive Plan will be done; Matt has seen a draft and will share upon request, but thinks next draft will be more valuable. Comment period likely coming up in June. We should be prepared for opposition from industry groups since the USFS is proposing a one-mile-wide corridor to manage and protect the trail.

Regarding bulldozer damage on the Tonto, a FOIA request showed lot of questionable activity and mistakes from Forest staff and permittee. ATA goal is to prevent this from happening again. Tonto offering \$18K to repair damage from the dozer, which has been completed. Unfortunately, this \$ is coming out of the Tonto NF's Recreation Budget when it should be paid for by Range.

State Fund: key allies within the State House and Senate will advocate for \$250,000 appropriation into the Fund. Matt will reach out when we should reach out to Representatives to encourage their support of the funding. Susan asked for talking points.

Arizona State Parks & Trails Grant opportunities: both maintenance and construction grants; to apply as non-profit, we need board resolution.

**Fred moved, Jan seconded. Resolution 2021-01 passed unanimously.**

7. Strategic Plan

Susan said there've been numerous suggestions; strategic plan review being done; she thinks ours is strong. Brainstorming is a possibility for next meeting; everyone brings an idea. Phyllis asked Kent's role; Susan clarified. Phyllis volunteered to take the lead. Thanks were expressed. James talked about challenges; reconfirmed commitment. Bianca said she'd join committee; likes diversity aspect. James agreed moment is propitious.

Susan asked Board Members to suggest an element for the Strategic Plan at the next Board Meeting. Matt said the current plan is approved through 2021 but need to develop the plan for 2022-2026 to be implemented beginning next year.

Strategic Plan Subcommittee is now James, Ambika, Susan, Bianca, with Phyllis as chair.

**Jan moved to approve the Subcommittee to carry out work on behalf of the Board; Ambika seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

8. Other business:

Phyllis talked about diversity training; feels safety is a universal problem that requires addressing; if not addressed we fall behind. Discussion.

Susan's summation: "There's a problem; we should all be part of solution" was widely approved. Matt said upcoming staff training would be open to Board members.

9. Other business: Matt spoke about the death of former Board President Gary Hohner, and also the recent loss of one of our board member's father.

Ambika summed up the Annual Executive Director review, and the Board's compensation decision.

**Ambika moved to adjourn the meeting. Jan seconded.  
Meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.**