

**Arizona Trail Association**  
**Board of Directors (Virtual) Meeting Minutes**

**Saturday, June 19, 2021**  
**10:00 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.**

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

**Board Members Absent:** Rob Mason

**Staff Present:** Matthew Nelson (Executive Director) Brittany Chavez (Development Director) Michael “Chappy” Chappell (Veteran Program Coordinator)

**Guests Present:** Dana Ernst, Kait Boyle

ITEM	ITEM DESCRIPTION	ACTION ITEMS
1	<p><b><u>Call to Order &amp; Welcome</u></b>            Board President, Susan Lagerman, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed board members, staff, and guests to the meeting. A quorum of Board of Directors members was in attendance. Susan asked the Board members, staff, and guests to introduce themselves to all attending.</p>	
2	<p><b><u>Approval of Board Meeting Minutes</u></b>            Board Secretary, Jan Hancock, thanked Lisa Schnebly Heidinger for recording the minutes from the March 20, 2021, Board meeting, and asked for any edits, additions, or corrections to the minutes. There were four corrections noted: on item number three, line number three at the end where it says membership for vote (missing the “e”), the Board Development Committee, line number three Dana’s last name starts with Capital E. Ambika noted her name was not listed, and item number seven at the end of the Strategic Plan Committee, add Ambika’s name to that committee as well.</p> <p>There were no other corrections, and Fred Gaudet made a motion to accept the minutes with the amendments, Lisa Schnebly Heidinger seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.</p>	
3	<p><b><u>Board Development Committee Report</u></b>            Chairperson Ambika Balasubramaniyan led the discussion and noted that we are still looking for an individual with finance competencies and would appreciate any potential candidate suggestions from the Board, and the two new Board member candidates confirmed they have limited competency in this area.</p>	

	<p>Dana Ernst provided a summary of his background and noted that he is a mathematics instructor at Northern Arizona University (NAU), and he lives in Flagstaff. Dana noted he thinks of the Arizona Trail as sort of being one of the crown jewels of the southwest. The outdoors, recreation, biking and rock climbing have given him so much and that has motivated him to start giving back. Dana added that he was someone who just likes to jump in and help wherever it may be needed and that he would be excited to have the opportunity to help and steward the Arizona Trail.</p> <p>Susan Lagerman asked if Dana knew anyone at NAU that could help with improving our Arizona Trail signs, and Dana noted he has a fellow instructor who is always looking for visual arts projects for his students, and that signing has been something that they have talked about in the past, and he offered to make a contact regarding AZT signage.</p> <p>Kaitlyn Boyle provided a summary of her background, noting her connection to Arizona is deep and meaningful to her. She shared she graduated from college for both her undergraduate and master's in outdoor education and environmental education and she has traveled the majority of the Arizona Trail through a variety of different trips, both personal backpacking, bike racing and teaching for Prescott College, where she taught for ten years with the adventure education program. Her passion really is educating people and connecting them to the environment and challenging them to act and be a steward for the landscapes where they recreate. She is also the co-founder of her organization Backpacking Roots, and she noted that Matt Nelson was one of the founding board members of her organization and that he been a mentor for her. Kait lives in the Teton Valley area of Idaho, and she travels twice a year to live in Prescott in the spring and fall seasons.</p> <p>Susan and Ambika welcomed both new Board member candidates and thanked them for providing some of their background information with the Board of Directors.</p>	
4	<p><b><u>Executive Director's Report</u></b></p> <p><b>A.</b> Matt Nelson reviewed his report that was submitted earlier in the week, and he provided some report highlights with the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fundraising:</b> The ATA has been able to secure over a million dollars since the beginning of January. Most of these dollars are through government grants and he is proud financially where the organization is right now.</li> <li>• <b>Wildfires:</b> Fires have been very top of mind for so many people, including the ATA's Director of Trail Operations, Shawn Redfield, who just had to evacuate from his home in Pine yesterday because of the <b>Backbone Fire</b>. It is on its</li> </ul>	<p>Board members are encouraged to read the full Executive Director's Report for more details and the items that were not discussed in the Board meeting.</p> <p>Board members interested in the Arizona State Trust Land topic please send an email to Matt for further discussion.</p>

way toward the communities of Strawberry and Pine and the Arizona Trail, including a portion of trail that was just recently built across Hardscrabble Mesa, and we are watching that one closely because it tripled in size overnight.

- The **Telegraph Fire** is currently at 175,000 acres and at 74% containment, and it has burned almost all of Passage 17 (Alamo Canyon) where 14.2 miles of trail has been burned. It looks like a low intensity burn through Sonoran Desert that may be able to recover quickly, especially because there is not a massive watershed above it that is burned.
- The **Slate Fire** just north of Flagstaff started off small and is continuing to burn. It is over 11,000 acres now and is mostly impacting a segment of the forest where we will be doing the Maverick Reroute that will remove the Arizona Trail from forest roads between Kelly Tank and Babbitt Lake, so a portion of that new alignment that we have designed has been burned. This fire is negatively impacting air quality right now for people throughout northern Arizona.
- Fred Gaudet asked if the rainwater collector in the Telegraph Fire area was affected. Matt replied that we know it did burn in the area where the rainwater collector is located, but considering it is made from steel with cool water interior, he does not anticipate any damage to that infrastructure at all. The cause of the fire is being investigated.
- Matt noted there is usually a funding source that is available called Burned Area Emergency Response. Most of that money goes toward stabilization, repair of infrastructure such as roads, highways, bridges, pipelines, power lines, etc., but he reported that occasionally we can get some money for trail rehabilitation, which we have been successful in doing the past two years. But it is a giant pot of federal money and oftentimes lots of states are in competition for it, and trails are not at the top of the list.
- Assessments of the fire damages will get underway, with approval from land management agencies, when it is safe to access the burn areas.
- Matt announced a new wildfire funding source was just approved two days ago through the Arizona state legislature. It is \$100 million dollars for fighting fires and related rehabilitation. Matt further reported that the ATA is working with the lobbying firm that helps us with a lot of state related issues to try to appropriate some of that \$100 million into Arizona State Parks and Trails so that we can apply for funding, and that is in the works right now.

- Matt noted these wildfires impact communities and people emotionally in a big way. He shared that he had a great conversation with a social science professor last week who is facilitating a master's thesis project on researching the emotional impacts of wildfires on communities, and they are using the Bighorn Fire, which happened in the Santa Catalina Mountains outside of Tucson last summer as one of their case studies. They have been interviewing dozens of individuals and organizations like ours. And so, it will be interesting to see the results of that study. But it was just a reminder that Matt thinks all of us are probably affected by these fires, especially if we have been to these places and we have a personal connection with the land. It almost feels like losing a friend.
- As a Board, just being conscious and aware that of that a sense of loss from these wildfires is emotionally important, and Matt noted that he personally knows people who are suffering because of these fires, and to please know that Matt feels your pain as well.

**B. New ATA Bookkeeper**

Continuing with highlights from Matt’s Executive Director’s Report, Matt shared that he and staff prepared a request for proposals for bookkeeping services, and he reported that four very qualified people were interested in serving as a bookkeeper for the ATA, and Matt informed the executive committee a few months ago that we now have a contract bookkeeper in place.

Her name is **Heather Thompson (Everything Counts, LLC)** and Matt noted she was by far the most qualified and she was excited to have this new connection to the Arizona Trail. Heather has been working with our staff on both monthly financials and helping clean up and consolidate our organization’s book reconciliation into a QuickBooks online program, and she was able to submit monthly financials from January through end of April in preparation for this Board meeting. Matt noted Heather has been great to work with and is really helping both Matt and Karri, ATA’s director of administration. He noted Heather Thompson is based in Tucson, and Matt and some other staff members have met with Heather in person, but 99% of the work she does is virtual.

**C. Land Acquisition**

This topic is something that has been discussed from time to time and Matt wanted to share with the Board that he is interested in Arizona State Trust Land purchase requests to develop a trailhead at Sahuarita Road that has been planned for over a decade now. The land purchase request, which was part of a large land acquisition package from Pima County, has basically been ignored

	<p>by the Arizona State Land Department. Pima County stated it is no longer interested in pursuing the purchase of land at this trailhead site, and thus it has been sitting dormant. Matt highly recommended that the ATA purchases the 2-acre trailhead site as an organization.</p> <p>Matt reported through our connections with the Partnership for the National Trails System, learning what funding is available for some of the costs associated with something like a purchase application, which would be about \$10,000 just to do the paperwork to get the land survey and all the pieces in place for the State Land Department to consider the purchase. And then the land is sold at auction to the highest bidder.</p> <p>Matt has been doing some outreach to developers in the area to let them know that the ATA is interested in potentially pursuing this piece of property and that we do not want them to bid against us. Matt noted that we do not want it to be competitive because we would rather develop this facility as a recreation-use trailhead. Matt reported we already actually have funding for the trailhead through the Heritage Fund, and then developers could develop properties around it, whether that's food or housing or whatever built around this recreational resource.</p> <p>Matt identified the different approaches to land acquisition that could be considered, and then he asked for questions and comments from the Board members. He received numerous comments from Susan Lagerman, Fred Gaudet, Jan Hancock, Ambika Balasubramaniyan, Lisa Schnebly Heidinger, Victoria Levin, Phyllis Ralley, and James Arndt, and details of these comments are included in the transcribed recording of the Board meeting for reference.</p> <p>Matt recommended that anybody who is interested in this Land Acquisition topic to please send him an email, either now or after the meeting, and what he will do is pull together a core group of people and then we have a follow up conversation and prepare information for the October board meeting.</p> <p>The Board members were in general agreement that this would be the best way to move forward so these discussions can be continued, and James Arndt suggested that this topic be included in the next full Board meeting agenda.</p>	
5	<p><b>Development Report</b></p> <p>Matt noted he hoped the Board had a chance to look through what he and Brittany Chavez have reported as an update on what has been happening in terms of development and he wanted to touch on some of the major highlights.</p>	

Matt reported the first big news is that ATA has been advocating for this great Great American Outdoors Act for years. It passed in Congress last year and the funding has just begun to be distributed. Matt worked with Laura White, the former Arizona National Scenic Trail Forest Service Administrator, to encourage federal agencies, mostly Forest Service, to apply for about \$6 million dollars in funding for the Arizona Trail. While that entire package was not approved, \$1.2 million dollars was approved, which is over a four-year period. So right now, for the next four years, ATA has a baseline commitment from the Forest Service of \$310,000 annually. As other projects come along, including everything else in that initial funding request, which Matt just applied for in the next fiscal year, and ATA can apply for that on an annual basis for 2023 and beyond, to be able to receive more funding. Matt felt confident that over the next couple of years ATA could see up to a million dollars per year coming from our Forest Service partners, specifically addressing the maintenance backlog on the Arizona Trail and some large development projects, whether that be converting roads to singletrack for some of our reroutes, trailhead construction, and other priority projects.

In addition to Great American Outdoors Act funding, the US Forest Service Region 3 Office has dedicated \$298,360 within a new Challenge Cost Share Agreement. As soon as that is signed – likely within the next two weeks – then ATA can begin spending to get reimbursed on a percentage of program and project costs, adding that one of the challenges with really large federal grants is that they're reimbursable grants, noting that we have to spend the money over a three month period, reconcile financials, which takes a month, then apply for funding or reimbursement, and then that can take up to two weeks.

Matt clarified that as we start to essentially double both our expenditures and then our revenue and operating budget, what we are going to need is more available capital. The good news is that we do have money in reserves, and it will become increasingly important to tap into that so that we could then get reimbursed and then put that money back into reserves.

Matt noted he just wanted to make the Board aware that there is a large amount of money coming from our federal partners right now. In addition to federal money, we secured two state grants through the Recreational Trails Program over the past few months. One is almost \$150,000 to support Temporal Gulch Reroute project in southern Arizona and then a \$50,000 trail maintenance grant to conduct priority maintenance on Passage 21 near Sunflower, which is necessary because of impacts from the Bush Fire of 2020. It is also going to improve the trail in an area that is prone to erosion and flooding in Boulder Canyon. He added that we are excited about that, as well as ATA also received additional

non-federal grants and corporate donations that have been received for some of these projects.

Matt also noted that ATA had a fundraiser event that was launched this spring for the Temporal Gulch project, and the Southern Arizona Hiking Club had an endowment from a couple that had passed away, so when they saw that we were doing additional fundraising for Temporal Gulch trail construction, they contributed \$20,000 in addition to the \$18,000 that ATA had raised from individuals. Therefore, because ATA is in an accrual accounting system now, realistically, in terms of fundraising and development, between January and now, we have secured \$1,164,510.

Matt also reported that we have some great partnerships in campaigns that are coming up from different companies who are donating percentages for various things. He noted that we also have an official boot for the Arizona Trail that is being developed by a company that is going to be released in July, and ATA receives a percentage of all boots sold between now and the end of this year, and the company is providing discount coupons for ATA members as well. This is a new boot company, so we do not know how many pairs are going to sell, but Matt noted that what he really loves about the company is their commitment to sustainability and they are the most eco-conscious manufacturing company that Matt has ever seen.

Matt also wanted to mention the upcoming Arizona Trail in a Day event, and Brittany has reached out to Board members about this event. Matt noted this is something ATA has been doing annually, which is one of our organization's biggest fundraisers for individuals with a goal to try to cover every mile of the Arizona National Scenic Trail in a single day. The event happens on October 9, but the registration, which is free, opens on July 1, 2021. Individuals can go online, and they can sign up and commit to a hike or bike or run on a short segment of the trail in October. We are asking the entire trail community to help us raise \$50,000, which Matt thinks is a very realistic goal. And, at Brittany's recommendation, like with all fundraisers, is that if we start off strong, it is more likely to help with building momentum. Brittany has asked our Board members to try to give or get or convince people to sign up for or encourage businesses to support us at \$1,000 each. Matt noted that the ask is for the Board to not necessarily send ATA \$1,000, which a few have pledged (thank you Lisa and Phyllis), and anybody else who has already contributed. However, the goal is to make a commitment to get more people involved in this event. The fundraising focus for this particular year is on wildlife monitoring, one of our programs, our youth programs, our veterans' program, and our general trail maintenance program, which will probably have a major portion dedicated to wildfire mitigation as well.

	<p>Phyllis noted to Matt that she would be donating her thousand dollars in the name of Eddie Arndt, our newest hiker (James’s new baby!) and James replied that Eddie has a way to go before he is tackling any sort of hiking boots!</p> <p>Susan shared that she has a friend she is meeting for dinner Wednesday who expressed interest in joining the ATA Board, possibly in the future, but in the interim, he is interested in development and thinks that we could have better fundraising events and the kind of things we are talking about that will require a lot of funds. Her friend liked the idea of owning land or owning more rights in some format which cannot be taken away, and this will cost money to apply and to carry out. Susan recommended that we officially form an ATA Fundraising/Development Committee, and that Brittany said she would be on our ATA Development Committee, too. ATA Bylaws already identify a Fundraising Committee, so no Board action is needed to kick start this committee.</p> <p>James shared that he was interested in participating on a development committee as well, and especially partnering with some brands and ads around the state. He noted that local companies offer a lot of opportunity to align our unique Arizona interests with their business.</p> <p>Susan also reported she had talked to the Circle Z Ranch for many years, and finally this year, they gave a donation and one of the statements that she noted that they know what it costs to build a trail, and she thought that other guest ranches are using the Arizona Trail for their rides, or they are probably using the Arizona Trail for their ranch visitors. Her friend liked the idea of owning land or owning more land rights in some format that cannot be taken away, which would cost money to apply and accomplish. Susan noted that ATA could possibly identify any ranches or outfitters using or interested in the Arizona Trail, and we could try to develop a relationship.</p>	
6	<p><b>Veteran Program Coordinator Report</b></p> <p>Matt confirmed that our Veteran Program Coordinator, Michael “Chappy” Chappel had submitted his Board report in advance, and that Chappy was going to be joining us by phone.</p> <p>Matt noted that Chappy and his family live outside of Tucson in the Rita Ranch area and that they are traveling to Sedona this weekend. But Chappy carved out a little bit of time to be able to join the board meeting, and this is report from Chappy is the recommendation of the executive committee that it would be nice to get to know some of the staff a little bit better, and learn more</p>	<p>Board members are encouraged to stay in touch with Chappy and let him know if anyone is aware of a veteran who would be a good candidate for this ATA Veteran Program, also known as “VETS.”</p>



	<p>about what they do, what they work on, and then also have a chance for them to meet the Board of Directors as well.</p> <p>Matt reported that it gave him a lot of pleasure to introduce Chappy, the ATA’s Veteran Program Coordinator, who has been working as a volunteer for the past six months and is now hourly staff and is doing some fantastic work with engaging veterans on the Arizona Trail.</p> <p>Chappy introduced himself to the board and provided a brief update on his work with the Veterans Program. Chappy has been managing the ATA Veterans Program that he likes to call “<b>VETS</b>” (which stands for <b>V</b>eteran <b>E</b>ngagement and <b>T</b>rail <b>S</b>tewardship) as of February this year. Chappy reported he will be ATA’s main point of contact for all veterans-related events going forward.</p> <p>Chappy shared that Wendy and our talented support staff at ATA have done an amazing job at conceptualizing this program last year and have entrusted it to him to evolve it even further. So as such, Chappy noted that he takes great pride in making these volunteer events as enjoyable and safe as possible for each participant, while maximizing our positive impact on the city and its gateway communities. He shared our ATA’s VETS program motto is “<b>We Build, We Protect.</b>” This past spring, the ATA hosted two separate veteran volunteer work weekend events in Four Peaks and north of Flagstaff, positively impacting over 10 miles of trail, engaging several veterans with our beautiful trail system and each other, and they collaborated with local stewards and land managers to create an unforgettable experience for our Veteran’s Program participants.</p> <p>Chappy reported there are two more veteran events slated for this year, one of which will be building a new section of Temporal Gulch Reroute project in October.</p> <p>Chappy’s report continued, and is available in the recorded Board meeting transcription, and at the conclusion of his report Susan Lagerman thanked Chappy and added that she just loved his slogan. Susan thanked Matt, for arranging to be directly hearing from Chappy at our Board meeting and seeing how our program is working and she expressed that hopefully more vets will get out on the trail and find the healing in nature...and she added that she feels Chappy’s a great guy.</p>	
7	<p><b>Strategic Plan Subcommittee Report</b> Phyllis Ralley, Subcommittee Chair, and Susan Lagerman, President provided a detailed report on the progress the Subcommittee has made in updating the existing ATA Strategic Plan for 5-Year adoption in 2022-2026. Phyllis thanked the Subcommittee members for their extensive teamwork in pulling the first DRAFT</p>	Board members may be sent a Strategic Plan survey prior to the next Subcommittee meeting.

	<p>together, and she shared that the Subcommittee is comprised of Susan, Ambika, James, Vicki, Bianca, and Phyllis.</p> <p>There were many comments and suggestions for changes on the DRAFT Strategic Plan from all Board members. A full written report on the topics discussed for nearly an hour is available in the transcribed copy of the meeting recording.</p> <p>Phyllis and Susan asked all Board members to please send their red-line suggestions and comments to the Subcommittee as soon as possible so they could continue to incorporate the comments and prepare a revised edition.</p> <p>Several Board members suggested that the Subcommittee send a survey out to the ATA membership to capture their comments and suggestions for the new Strategic Plan that the Subcommittee could also consider as they work on their DRAFT document. Matt suggested that there be a deadline established for the submittal of the surveys, and that the survey be available online.</p> <p>The Subcommittee committed to set a next meeting date to continue their work of the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>The Strategic Plan Subcommittee will be scheduling a meeting date to continue their work on the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Chair Phyllis Ralley asked that anyone who has any red-line suggestions and comments on the DRAFT Strategic Plan to please submit them as soon as possible.</p>
8	<p><b><u>Open Discussion</u></b></p> <p>Susan and Matt offered to review the staff reports and answer any questions any Board members may have. There were no questions and Phyllis made the comment that the GIS report by Aaron Siefert was outstanding.</p> <p>There being no further business to discuss, Ambika made a motion for the Board meeting to adjourn, and Vicki seconded the motion and the regular Board meeting adjourned at 2:18 p.m.</p>	
9	<p><b><u>Other Business - Executive Session</u></b></p> <p>Susan Lagerman convened the Executive Session at 12:22 p.m.</p>	<p>The next Executive Committee meeting will be scheduled prior to the next Board of Directors meeting, which has been scheduled for October 2, 2021, (location to be determined).</p>
10	<p><b><u>Important Upcoming Dates</u></b></p> <p>Matt reported there were three important ATA activities and meetings scheduled for the upcoming months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USFS National Scenic Trail Strategic Plan Review (TBD)</li> <li>• Executive Committee Meeting – August 15 – 5:00 p.m. (Zoom)</li> <li>• ATA Autumn Board Meeting – October 2 (in-person or Zoom?)</li> </ul> <p>Susan asked that all Board members save these dates in their personal calendars and both Susan and Matt will be keeping in</p>	<p>Board members to please save the dates for future meetings on their calendars.</p>

	touch with all Board members with any changed information and updates, and they will keep Board members informed with Save the Date reminders.	
11	<b>Adjourn</b> There being no further business to discuss, Ambika made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Vicki, and the meeting adjourned at 12:51 p.m.	