

Arizona Trail Association
Autumn Board of Directors Meeting
October 2, 2021 8 – 9:56 am
held virtually through Zoom

Board Members in attendance: Ambika Balasubramaniyan, Fred Gaudet, Jan Hancock, Susan Lagerman, Vicki Levin, Rob Mason, Phyllis Ralley, Bianca Salazar, Lisa Schnebly Heidinger
Prospective Board Members in attendance: Kait Boyle, Dana Ernst
Staff in attendance: Matt Nelson
Guests in attendance: Jake Baechle

Welcome from Board President

Susan called the meeting to order at 8:00 am. She welcomed prospective board members, thanked them for their time and talent, and reminded all that board participation is very important. The trail is impacted once again this year by fire and now water, both of which have been destructive. Susan expressed regret that we have to meet virtually again, and looks forward to meeting in person again when it's safe to do so.

Susan expressed that the goal for this meeting is to find out from the executive director how the Board can help the association to meet our goals. Susan shared that this Board is comprised of experience, with people who have expertise with horses, bicycles, hiking, photography, writing, educating, and more. She thanked everyone for giving valuable time today.

Approval of Board Meeting Minutes

Jan made a motion to approve the board meeting minutes from June. Phyllis seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

ATA Member Survey

Next up is a discussion about our recent Arizona Trail Association member survey, which was intended to inform a little bit of direction surrounding our strategic plan for the next five years. So we were fortunate enough to have Jake Baechle, Research Associate, take the lead on development and implementation and now reporting on that.

Jake reported that a total of 763 individuals responded to the survey (of 2,200 members) so we can say with a confidence that this is an accurate representation of both the Arizona Trail Association's demographics and the feelings of Arizona Trail Association members. Jake presented key findings to the Board, and the Member Survey results are published on the ATA website for all to see.

Some of the key findings:

- the largest age group for Arizona Trail Association members is the 60 to 69
- average age of the Arizona Trail Association member is 58.6 years old.
- 64% are male; 35% female; 1% non-binary

- 96% White, only 2% are two or more races, and 2% Other. By contrast, if you're looking at the State of Arizona, you have more of a diverse representation of ethnicities and race: 54% white; 32% Hispanic or Latino; 5% American Indian or Alaskan Native; 5% Black or African-American; 4% Asian.
- 18.2% of members have been involved for less than a year
- 18.2% of have been involved for over 10 years
- 50% have been involved for 1-5 years
- ATA members fiercely supported the following: preserve the wilderness experience, support forest health initiatives, engage in policy making, pursue land acquisition opportunities. They want to see strengthened partnerships fund maintenance, ongoing opportunities for volunteerism and developing water resources. Remove the trail from dirt roads received 90% support.
- Accessible trail was the least supported, with 62% percent support and 13% oppose. - - 85% support engaging veterans
- 71% supported diversity training
- For challenges facing the Arizona Trail, fire, water and climate change were the biggest.

The Board thanked Jake for his service in this data gathering, sorting and reporting effort.

Strategic Plan

Phyllis and Bianca discussed the Strategic Plan Committee's work, including a review of the 2016-2021 Plan and taking a close look at the Member Survey for anything that would impact our strategic plan. The goal of making the trail more accessible was removed due to lack of support for this within the survey, and it potentially conflicting with the nature and purpose of the Arizona Trail.

Rob suggested minor verbiage changes to reduce redundancy and clean-up the document. Phyllis and Vicki also offered minor language changes. Lisa helped with crafting their ideas into prose that fit well within the document.

There was a discussion about lack of measurable outcomes within the draft Strategic Plan, which the Committee and Board determined were best for the Plan, but an annual Work Plan with measurable goals and objectives would be reviewed each year and voted on by the Board.

Dana motioned to approve the Strategic Plan with edits suggested during the discussion. Jan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director Report

Matt reported on Arizona Trail in a Day initiative coming up on October 9th. He encouraged outreach through talking to friends, emailing, social media, etc. to get as many people on the trail, and to help us reach our fundraising goal (right now we're @ 50% of that goal).

Matt also reported on the Arizona Trail Administrator position. The Forest Service eliminated the Arizona National Scenic Trail Administrator position and combined it with the Region 3 Trails and Dispersed

Recreation Program Manager. Everybody is collectively concerned that combining those positions will make being an administrator of a National Scenic Trail incredibly challenging, if not impossible.

Matt also mentioned that in the event of another government shutdown (currently, the federal government is operating through a Continuing Resolution) the ATA is still allowed to conduct activities on the trail. Other partner organizations will be told to cease all activities in the event of a government shutdown because federal agency staff are not allowed to work. But the ATA is unique in this situation because 1) we have blanket approval to continue; and 2) we carry our own liability insurance. October 1st marks the beginning of probably our busiest season in the history of the organization in terms of number of projects that we have on the ground. If you look at our calendar on our website, you'll see that there's something planned every weekend and sometimes there are multiple things planned every weekend from now through the end of the year. And that doesn't include all the conservation corps and paid contractors and staff that we have working on trail projects, but it's really busy and it's going to stay that way into the foreseeable future.

Regarding the Annual Meeting on February 5, after talking with the executive committee, the overwhelming majority believe that an in-person annual meeting would not be possible at this time. So the recommendation is to have a virtual meeting on February 5th 2022 and then if situations change for 2023, we can look at coming together again, whether that's outdoors and distanced or in-person again in an indoor venue.

In terms of Finances, Matt reported that the ATA is in a good financial situation, especially with all of the agreements that were implemented as of October 1. The great news there is that there's a lot of money available (over \$500,000 in reimbursable expenses) however we have to spend that money first in order to get repaid. So the fact that we have \$612,500.06 in total assets means that we'll be able to afford everything that we need to in terms of paying contractors, conservation corps staff and everybody to get the work done and then get reimbursed from either the Forest Service or State Parks on a on a quarterly basis.

Form 990

Matt reminded the Board that one of the things that needs to be voted on today is the Form 990, which is an incredibly important tax document that's made publicly available. The Finance Committee had an opportunity to review it, and it's required that the board takes a formal vote on the Form 990 to approve it so we can make that publicly available.

As Chair of the Finance Committee Rob motioned to approve the Form 990. Lisa seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Future Meeting Dates

In the interest of time, Matt said he would follow up with all Board Members about preferred meeting dates for Spring, Summer and Autumn Board Meetings.

Additional Thoughts & Contributions

Susan mentioned that although we didn't have a chance to go around and gather ideas from individual Board Members, please add those in the chat or email because I think everybody here has a good idea that can contribute to us improving what we do and how we do it.

Adjourn

Susan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:56 am. Lisa seconded. Unanimous consent.

Board Meeting was recorded through Zoom, and a transcription of the entire meeting provided through the Sonix platform online. These Meeting Minutes reflect the core of the discussion, however in the interest of transparency and accurate data reporting, a complete transcription (33 pages) is kept on file for any Board Member, ATA Member, or others to review upon request.