

**Arizona Trail Association
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2022 – Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix**

Board Members in attendance:

Susan Lagerman, Ambika Balasubramaniyan, Bianca Salazar, Phyllis Ralley, Victoria Levin, James Arndt, Lisa Schnebly Heidinger, Kait Boyle (virtual), Dana Ernst (virtual)

Staff in attendance:

Matt Nelson, Karrie Kressler (virtual)

I. Welcome

Susan welcomed all, commenting that the ATA prospered due to great leadership.

II. Board Development

Ambika explained form shows all board members terms, strengths, and interests. We had three openings because Jan, Fred and Rob retired.

Phyllis asked if three departing Board Members were thanked for service. Susan said yes, and their plaques and letters were sent with gratitude.

Matt mentioned they had a collective 50 years of service to ATA. Jan had put in 28 years alone.

Ambika will invite them to join advisory board.

Talks ongoing with CPA Susan invited for consideration.

Want someone active in fundraising.

II.a. Committees

Membership Development Chair was Vicki

Board Development Chair is Ambika

Trail Operations Committee – this committee is currently made up of seven participants, two of which are staff. Chair: Dana.

Finance Committee – per ATA bylaws this committee is to be chaired by ATA Treasurer. Ambika is willing to serve as Treasurer in a strong interim capacity until another Board Member with more financial experience can step into that role. Susan and Bianca will offered to join the committee. Chair: Ambika.

Financial Development Committee (inactive) – Matt says this committee has been vacant as far as he can remember.

Susan has someone in mind to join the Board who would fit this committee chair role well. Susan suggests asking Diana Nash at Circle Z Ranch; an equestrian, well-connected, knows trails, and runs ranch as philanthropy south of Patagonia.

Kait asks if four suggested committees are being added yet. She'd be interested in Trail Operations, but if four proposed committees are formed then she would be more interested in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, or Policy and Advocacy.

Matt says all are important and have been discussed. If any board member wants to lead one, we should add it.

Voting on Board Officers:

James moves to vote on board President; nominating Susan. Phyllis seconds the motion. It is unanimously approved.

James moves to vote on board Treasurer, nominating Ambika. Susan seconds. It is unanimously approved.

James moves to vote on board Secretary, nominating Lisa. Phyllis seconds. It is unanimously approved.

James nominates Ambika as VP of Finance Committee. Vicki seconds. It is unanimously approved.

James nominates Dana as VP of Trail Operations Committee. Phyllis seconds. It is unanimously approved.

James nominates Ambika as VP of Board Development. Vicki seconds. It is unanimously approved.

Viki nominates James as VP of Membership Development. Ambika seconds. It is unanimously approved.

Matt asks Kait if she wants to chair a new committee; she asks which is most beneficial; he says all four are vitally important. Ambika favors policy and advocacy. It will be revisited later in the meeting. Matt adds again that Indigenous representation is vital, and that geographically, the Phoenix Metro area is overrepresented. All agree.

Phyllis asks about Fernando Shipley; Matt says he will join when time is right but not yet; Ambika asks him to add Pablo Burghardt to our outreach efforts.

III. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes

Lisa moves for approval of Board Meeting Minutes from Oct. 2. James seconds. It is unanimously approved.

IV. 2022 Priorities

Guided by the Strategic Plan, a list of Organizational Priorities was assembled by staff into these categories: Admin and Development; Trail Operations; Volunteer Program; Veterans; Youth Outreach; Gateway Communities; Social Media; and Government Affairs.

Matt wants input, suggestions, questions about these goals, and is anything missing?

Kait says she was impressed by depth and how specific and measurable each one is. Wonders if Matt has tools to track progress on these. Matt says yes; staff likes metrics, too. Trail Ops share google spreadsheet as a clearinghouse for projects in the works and then completed.

Matt says the document can be revised; once it's approved, highlight where board participation occurs.

Evaluating Gateway Community program is necessary, too, since this program has been neglected during COVID.

James makes a motion to approve goals and priorities 2022 with suggested edits. Ambika seconds. It is unanimously approved.

Matt reviews 2021 Priorities and asks if there are questions about incomplete goals. He explained why any were not accomplished; majority was beyond our control. Tribal engagement wasn't given enough attention but can be moved forward after DEI training in 2022.

Susan asks DEI training. Justice Outside is the organization chosen to lead the training. James says they should be asked about Board Development. All Staff are required to attend the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion training, and all Board are invited to attend.

V. Development and Financial Report

Matt reviews 2021 YE financials. January included, but budget not voted on yet so it's just income and expenditures.

Matt says in summary, we had a very successful year. Our biggest challenges were related to government grants; money initially approved but has been held up due to Congress not being able to pass a budget. Projects were delayed; Great American Outdoors Act funding on hold; and waiting on new Challenge Cost Share Agreement.

Matt says large growth occurred in non-government grants and corporate donations. Most staff received COL increase for 2022. Anyone on the Board can request monthly financial reports, prepared by our contracted CPA. Ambika asks why donor advised funds doubled. It was from a recent \$30K donation. Corporate donations were greater last year. Susan asked cause; Matt said he and Brittany doing outreach made the difference. Phyllis asks about board member dues. A line item is important because people want to see board giving. Ambika asked about tracking corporate matched gifts; Matt says it's attached to individuals within our CRM. Maybe that should be a blurb in newsletters; to ask if employers can include ATA as an approved beneficiary.

It would be ideal if board contributions are shown on budget; Matt says when publicly available materials are prepared, it would be good to reflect board-solicited contributions. "Responsible for raising" would be good category. Kait says fundraisers are good chances. Dana asks if Board Members get reminded to donate. We don't.

Health insurance costs are down because some employees opted out.

Discussion of value in bringing CPA on board; could be helpful in ways beyond monthly work.

James moves to accept the Draft 2022 Budget as presented. Ambika seconds. It is unanimously approved.

VI. Member and Donor Restructuring Proposal

Karrie Kressler joins the meeting virtually. ATA Staff Wendy, Brittany and Karrie met to evaluate our CRM, wanted better view of all people who engage in ATA in all ways. A volunteer management system is separate from volunteers;

membership is separate from donations and it has caused issues. CRM will be moved to Sales Force, an upgrade, working with WaterGrass. Sacrifices are being made to make it work better. Proposal is to combine donors and members. Hope to grow member count by making it easier to sign up. Want to keep coupons at higher level to maintain value. Wants feedback. CRM and volunteer management portal is up for renewal soon, so making decisions quickly is important. This should also make it easier to do year-end books.

Lots of discussion about the process, reworking membership levels and benefits, and combining members and donors into the same “community.” Overall consensus that it sounds like a good thing.

Kait says this looks like very inclusive membership including a younger and more diverse crowd; lets them engage in ways not just financial. Much discussion about donor gifts, levels of membership, items for incentive.

There will be an easier system for support; membership will be on website. Karrie hopes to dissolve PayPal and move toward a better payment platform for the benefit of our supporters.

VII. Executive Director Report

HB2789 was recently introduced. The Arizona Trail Fund has received an appropriation from the State Legislature only six times in 15 years; water and public access were included to get buy-in. House speaker was supposed to introduce but handed off to new legislator. Lupe Diaz in LD14 where Trail starts. Much discussion of the bill’s future, and mining association opposition.

Julie Polovitch will be leaving her position as Youth Outreach Coordinator for Northern Arizona at the end of May. Ambika asks if we’re staffing ahead of needs on Trail Operations, and Matt confirmed yes.

VIII. Other Business

Policy & Advocacy – Ambika suggests forming a committee to handle political advocacy: Kait (Chair), James, Susan, Ambika and Phyllis agreed to join the committee. They will meet soon to discuss best practices and current issues.

Upcoming Dates --

March 19: ATA is nominated for an Environmental Excellence Award at the Arizona Forward Gala

April 23: Highline celebration at Pine Trailhead

June 11: Summer board meeting in Flagstaff

Bianca moves to adjourn the meeting. James seconds. It is unanimously approved.