

**Arizona Trail Association
Board of Directors Springtime Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2023
Desert Botanical Garden ~ Phoenix, AZ**

Board Members present: Bianca Salazar, Shawn Redfield, Vicki Levin, Karen Gresham, Dana Ernst, David Rabb

Staff: Matthew Nelson

Guests: Marcy DeMillion (AZNST Administrator for US Forest Service), Susan Lagerman (former Board President)

Board Members not present: Ambika Balasubramaniyan, Clark Tenakhongva

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Board Members shared their personal connections to the Arizona Trail, and what they're most looking forward to in 2023.

Since Ambika is traveling internationally to celebrate her father's birthday, Matt led the meeting. He began by welcoming all board members, including the recently elected board members (Shawn, Karen, David and Clark).

II. Election of Officers

- Vicki made a motion to elect Ambika as Board President. Shawn seconded; it passed unanimously. Matt mentioned that Ambika had expressed interest in the position and is willing to serve as Board President for one year until her second term on the board expires in February of 2024.
- Dana made a motion to elect David as Board Treasurer. Bianca seconded; it passed unanimously.
- David made a motion to elect Bianca as Board Secretary. Dana seconded; it passed unanimously.

III. Board Committees

Five standing committees were discussed, and Board Members volunteered to serve on each committee:

- Board Development: VP-TBD; Vicki; Dana
- Finance & Financial Development: VP- David; Karen
- Trail Operations: VP- Dana; Shawn; David
- Policy & Advocacy: VP- Karen; Shawn; Dana
- Gateway Communities: VP- Bianca; David; Shawn

IV. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from October 15, 2022

The previous Board Meeting Minutes were reviewed and discussed. No changes were recommended. Vicki made a motion to approve the minutes; Bianca seconded; it passed unanimously.

V. AZNST Administrator Update

Marcy shared that the USFS Interdisciplinary Team will be working on the Comprehensive Plan for the Arizona Trail as soon as a similar plan is finished for the Pacific Northwest Trail. They should be working on this full-time as of April 2023. The public release is anticipated for July 2023. Due to issues with the PNT Plan, the USFS is watching comments to minimize conflicts and potential litigation with the AZT Comp

Plan. Three rounds of scoping with Arizona Tribes with the Programmatic Agreement (PA) have been completed, and the PA will be included in the Comp Plan. The PA includes definitions for routine trail maintenance that don't require NEPA compliance – this will benefit the Trail Operations and Volunteer programs significantly. One year after public scoping begins, it is anticipated that the Comp Plan will be signed by the Chief of the US Forest Service. Anticipating objections from mining and other industry interests. Advertising \$ is budgeted with Arizona-based newspapers to encourage public comment, and ATA is asked to help with outreach to generate more comments for the plan, too.

Marcy and Matt met with Office of General Counsel to discuss AZT logo(s) when they were in Washington, DC in February. That agreement, which will define the use of Arizona Trail logos, is forthcoming.

Dana inquired, "What are the benefits of the Comprehensive Plan, and what are the issues without having one?" Marcy and Matt explained that without a Comp Plan and its overarching guiding principles, management of the trail is subject to individual forests and their plans. Once signed, this Plan will be the guiding document for all federal agencies (and recommendations for state, county, city and private). It's all about consistent management across all federally-managed lands.

Dana also asked if information about e-bikes needs to be included within the Comp Plan. Marcy clarified that the current USFS Policy on e-bikes being defined as motorized uses makes them illegal on the Arizona Trail (a Congressionally designated non-motorized trail). Since the USFS policy takes care of that, mention of e-bikes won't be included in the Comp Plan.

VI. Executive Director Report

Matt gave an overview of 2022 Accomplishments related to the board-approved work plan, and presented a preliminary list of 2023 goals.

Board Members engaged in discussion about why membership numbers are decreasing and provided recommendations to boost members #s and revenue:

- David asked if it is coincidence that member #s went down the same year we did a member restructuring.
- Board recommends better explanation on why membership is important.
- Shawn suggested Trail Angel engagement to promote membership, donations, and ATA support since these are people interacting with trail users.
- Use the "Class of..." page to encourage membership and donations.
- Prioritize the importance of membership in our communications.
- Shawn asked if there can be a grace period (30 days) after expiration date to access website.
- Volunteer, Vets and Youth Programs should be encouraging memberships during their interactions with the general public!

Matt proposed a paid two-month sabbatical after his 11+ years of service as Executive Director. Details are included within the attached document. Dana made a motion to accept the proposal; Karen seconded; discussion surrounded whether or not Matt should make himself available for one-hour per week as outlined within the proposal (Matt responded

that supporting existing staff and the Interim Executive Director is important); it passed unanimously.

VII. Trail Operations

Board Members engaged in discussion about Trail Operations:

- VP of Trail Ops should be invited to monthly Trail Ops Meetings
- VP of Trail Ops would benefit from meeting minutes, and can share those with the Trail Ops Committee
- Specific locations for gate needs for donors make it easier for the organization to fundraise
- Donation requests for VERY project specific needs, shared online, publicly and with the Board.

VIII. 2023 Priorities

- David suggested adding a “Gateway Community style” program specific to Indigenous Communities so there is structure to native engagement through a formal program
- Karen suggested an initiative to grow our financial reserves to more than three months’ operating budget.

IX. 2023 Budget

Matt presented a draft of the 2023 Budget, based on 2022 year-end financials. The 2023 Budget will essentially mimic the 2022 budget (actuals) with more federal grant revenue possible from the US Forest Service.

David made a motion to accept the Budget; Dana seconded; it passed unanimously.

X. Future Board Meeting Dates

- Saturday, August 12 – Flagstaff (Buffalo Park)
- Sunday, October 29 – Kearny (or other location in southern AZ)

XI. Adjourn

Dana made a motion to adjourn the meeting; David seconded; it passed unanimously at 3:24 pm.

submitted by Matthew Nelson