

Ouachita Mountain Hikers

Board of Directors Virtual Meeting Minutes

February 5, 2025

The Board of Directors Meeting was held virtually using Microsoft Teams.

In attendance: Tom Calhoun (President), Jen DePaola (Vice-president), Christina Lammers (Treasurer/Membership Chair), Chuck Eckerson (Secretary), David Wheeler (Hike Chair) and Bill Lammers (Publicity Chair, Webmaster and Hike Flash Coordinator). Absent: None

Call to Order

President Tom Calhoun called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 PM.

Hike Leader Guidance

Hike Chair David Wheeler. Explained that he has simplified the Hike Leader Guidelines.

- The basic outline has not changed.
- It incorporates Bill Lammers' simplified methodology for collecting and distributing shuttle money with one person being at the center of collection and distribution of shuttle money.
- It adds a section about dealing with guests and collecting release of liability waivers from any hike participant who has not submitted one (guest or not).

Tom encouraged the Board members to read the new Hike Leaders Guidelines and 1) comment as needed, and 2) encourage other hike leaders and members to read it as well. These guidelines should be reviewed and discussed at the annual Hike Leaders Luncheon.

Tom asked David to summarize the document in 8-10 bullet points that we could publish in Hike Flash.

We discussed ways that we might make it easier for hike participants to find out particular details about hikes.

Filling Critical Club Leadership Positions

All position descriptions have been updated on the website.

Tom reported that David Slininger is open to serving as Hike Chair on an interim basis.

We will use the Hike Flash to highlight a particular club leadership position each week.

There was some discussion about members serving in an apprenticeship role to help them to prepare for taking on leadership responsibility.

We discussed the importance of asking people directly to consider serving in a leadership capacity rather than waiting for them to volunteer.

We mentioned that many past board members are still active in the club and often serve as shuttle drivers. Shuttle drivers may know some things about other club members' leadership interests and abilities that we may not know.

The Hike Chair is the most critical position that needs attention first. Tom asked us each to consider being the Hike Chair. And the pool of candidates after that should be the hike leaders.

Tom will send an email to past board members asking them who they thought would be good candidates for leadership positions.. They might be able to generate names we might not think of. A single email with three points to former board members could accomplish this. The three points are:

- What other hikers might be good in leadership positions
- Talk it up on the trails
- Consider serving in a leadership position again.

Tom will draft an email communication to former board members.

Jen will draft something tomorrow to go out in the Hike Flash to highlight leadership positions, one per week, starting with the Hike Chair. The content will be a few key points about the responsibilities and contain a link to the full position description. Having this in the Hike Flash will also open the door for leadership-related conversations on the trail.

Increasing Participation in Trail Maintenance

We discussed putting something in the Hike Flash about needing more Trail Maintenance participation, but decided that we need to guard against overloading the club with information and expectations.

Hike Flash Communications

We discussed making the Hike Flash have more of a Newsletter look. But there are two key factors that need to be incorporated into this discussion.

- Whatever we send must be viewable on multiple device types
- Creating a newsletter-style format will create more work on the publicity chair AND it will likely require higher skill-levels for whoever serves in that role next.

We decided that this was not an idea we can consider at this time.

Recruiting New Hike Leaders

We will highlight Hike Leader positions in the Hike Flash after all other club leadership positions have been "advertised." And we noted that individual, conversational invitations to people to consider being a hike leader may be the most effective approach.

Parties and Social Events

In lieu of our decision at the last Board meeting to not have parties and events that are not connected to hikes, we explored options for a hike followed by a social event (i.e. meal) and General Membership meeting, possibly in January 2026.

There were concerns about the traditional Holiday party being in December, the cost and the logistics.

There was a strong sentiment for having the social event at a sit-down restaurant in order to avoid all the busy December schedules, cost and logistics (e.g. preparing food, decorations, setting up tables, cleaning up, etc.). We typically spend over \$100 on paper goods for the Holiday Party and this idea would eliminate that expense. To the extent that the gift exchange was a deterrent to some members, having a hike/party in January would eliminate that deterrent. Location ideas included Superior, Rolandos, Mr. Whiskers, and Clampit's,

Use of Club Funds

We discussed several categories of expenses:

- To promote OT participation (and completion)
- To promote hiking
- To promote trail maintenance
- To promote hike leadership
- To pay for parties and social events
- To pay operational expenses

We spent a lot of time discussing traditions and alternatives for OT Completion celebrations.

We also discussed the possibility of having a fundraising campaign, i.e. simply asking members to consider making a donation to our club. Other 501(c)3 organizations encourage donations. Why not us? It was argued that if we need to solicit funds from our membership, there is something wrong with our dues structure. Christina added that we have over \$4,000 in our account right now. Bill mentioned that from his experience in the university environment, most capital campaigns were centered around doing something now, e.g. a new building, a new program, etc. Chuck mentioned that a lot of people have simply bought into our mission and would donate just because furthering our mission is something they believe in. He also brought up a visionary question of, "If we had an extra \$10,000 in our account, what would we do that we can't do now?" Tom pointed out that we really don't have the bandwidth to do much more than we are currently doing. The idea of fundraising with the membership did not gain much traction so no action was taken.

New Members

We are continuing to attract new hikers. Christina mentioned that since January, we have added seven annual members and one lifetime member.

Future agenda items

- Decision about discontinuing the lifetime membership option. (We agreed that if we decide to eliminate the lifetime membership option for the future, 1) it should be effective at the beginning or a hike year, and 2) it will not apply to those who are already Lifetime Members.)
- Explore plans for a hike/social/general membership meeting in January, 2026.

Tom indicated that we will need to address the lifetime membership question in advance of the May 31 General Membership meeting. Aside from this decision, he does not anticipate a need for another full Board meeting between now and the May 31 End of Year Picnic, And if a need develops between now and then, it can probably be done virtually.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM.

Post-meeting Proposal

Tom made the following proposal not in the meeting itself but rather by email in the process of reviewing and discussing the meeting minutes. I am capturing it because it is relevant to future Board actions.

Proposal on Lifetime membership - please respond with comments

- *In dollar terms, a lifetime membership is the same thing as paying 10 years of annual dues in advance.*
- *As long as we hold the extra years of dues in reserve and apply them proportionally to our income each year, then we are OK financially and we have saved ourselves some dues collecting work.*
- *On the other hand, the bookkeeping is a bit tricky, and any dues increases in the future would only fall upon annual dues payers.*
- *We have gotten some push back from life members when mentioning assessments on life members*
- ***I propose that we eliminate life memberships beginning with the 2025-26 membership year. To clarify, we could set a deadline of say October 1, 2025 to pay for a life membership. After that only annual memberships would be offered.***
- *If we decide to do this, it will require a Bylaws change and a vote by the membership*

Respectfully Submitted,
Chuck Eckerson, Secretary