

## **RATC Board Meeting Minutes**

October 1, 2018

Glenvar Branch Library, 3917 Daugherty Road

### **In Attendance:**

Board members: Jim Beeson, Brian Boggs, Diana Christopulos, Susan Herndon-Powell, Anne Kohinke, Josiah Leonard, Terri McClure, Chris Means, Bob Peckman, Julio Stephens, Susan Terwilliger, Jim Webb

Others: Jonathan Eagle, Brent Jones, Katie Jones, Bill Neilan, Jenny Steding

Meeting was called to order by Jim Beeson at 7:00 p.m.

### **Approval of September 5 Board Meeting Minutes (Susan Terwilliger):**

Corrections: The date of the Virginia Regional Partnership Meeting, erroneously reported as October 21, was changed to October 20.

Approved: A motion was made to approve the minutes, it was seconded, and the motion passed.

### **Treasurer's Report (Terri McClure):**

Terri reported that 30 people have recently renewed their membership. Current financial information is posted on the RATC website.

Financial activity since last board meeting (as of 10/1/2018):

Total in Checking: \$47,366.83

Total Monetary Assets: \$62,342.34

Receipts (YTD): \$10,460.75

Expenditures (YTD): \$14,417.06

See RATC website <https://www.ratc.org/financial-report/> for full financial reports.

### **Membership Report (Chris Means):**

Chris has sent out reminders to members who have not yet paid their annual dues. New business cards have been ordered with information about Ridgerunners, and club brochures now include information about lifetime membership options. Chris also announced that he will be moving to Nova Scotia in April or May 2019 and will not be able to serve on the board past March.

### **Regular Reports**

#### **Trail Supervisor's Report (Jim Webb):**

Jim scheduled three work hikes during the past month; one was canceled because of the threat of Hurricane Florence. Work crews replaced a bridge at Dismal Creek and installed 12 steps on the Dragon's Tooth trail. Other work included removing blowdowns and fixing damage to the McAfee Knob trail caused by the recent wind and rain.

- Jim had a productive meeting with Erik Taylor (U.S. Forest Service) on September 6. Upcoming trail maintenance plans include putting tent pads at the Catawba Mountain campsite, redoing the Andy Layne trail (2020), and repairing the Craig Creek bridge (2021).
- A crew of former Konnarock workers plans to finish work at Sinking Creek begun earlier this summer. Bob Peckman remarked that the crew should be treated well (good food, etc.) as a way to show appreciation. Susan Herndon-Powell suggested giving crewmembers RATC T-shirts.

**Hikemaster's Report (Susan Herndon-Powell):**

Susan reported that a grant has been submitted to cover expenses for RATC hike leaders to attend a wilderness first aid (WFA) training class. There is one coming up in November and another in spring 2019. The funding request will be decided at the October 20 Virginia Regional Partnership Meeting.

- Susan announced that she plans to leave her position as hikemaster but is willing to train a replacement. A discussion ensued on the difficulties of finding enough qualified and willing hike leaders. Bob Peckman suggested calling people (especially those who participate in group hikes) and asking them to lead some hikes. Jim Beeson noted that hike leader training is an important prerequisite for all potential leaders.

**Conservation Supervisor's Report (Butch Kelly):**

Butch was absent.

**Shelter Supervisors' Report (Homer and Therese Witcher):**

Homer and Therese were absent. A work hike is planned the last weekend in October to relocate the privy at Pickle Branch shelter and improve the blue-blaze water trail.

**McAfee Knob Task Force Report (Brian Boggs/David Youmans):**

Brian announced that four new Ridgerunners were trained on September 23, including a former biology professor at Virginia Western Community College who may recruit Virginia Western students as volunteers. Recent orientation hikes were held on September 28 (Dragon's Tooth) and September 30 (McAfee Knob). Some Ridgerunners report hearing a few complaints about Appalachian Trail closures during the hurricane.

**Land Management Supervisor's Report (David Youmans):**

Dave was absent.

**Newsletter Editor's Report (Bob Peckman):**

Bob handed out color copies of the fall Trail Blazer featuring Maurice Turner on the cover and including tributes from people who knew him. Bob reflected on Maurice, Andy Layne, and their legacies. Diana Christopoulos commended the Blazer's detailed descriptions of the Konnarock work hikes this summer.

**Updates and Action Items****1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Jim Beeson):**

- a. Narrows Mill Creek Nature Park connector proposal: Chris Means recently spoke with David Jones, who originally presented this proposal to the board. The hike to allow board members to visit this proposed connection with the AT will likely be on Sunday, October 21. Although an eventual decision is needed, the urgency to allow the connection has largely disappeared.
- b. Holiday potluck: December 8. Tim Lewis, an ultramarathoner, will present the program. Scott Karns is coordinating other details.
- c. Virginia 311 portable toilets: NPS funding to cover rental of these units will extend until May 2019. Jim reported that the diaper dumpers who have fouled the toilets for several months are back, despite measures taken to discourage them. The board briefly discussed what the next steps might be.
- d. Virginia Regional Partnership Meeting: October 20. As mentioned above, a funding request to allow some RATC hike leaders to attend a WFA class will be decided.
- e. Chainsaw training: October 13-14. Josh Kloehn and Forest Service personnel are coordinating. Four employees of Celanese (a cellulose acetate factory near Narrows, Va.) will be participating.
- f. Nominating/Budget Committees: These committees will be formed soon, especially since several RATC board members are leaving their posts.

- g. Walkabout Outfitters: A store representative will attend the November 5 board meeting and provide an update on Walkabout's secret shopper program and its benefits to the RATC.

## **2. Digital Media/MVP Update (Diana Christopulos):**

- a. Mountain Valley Pipeline: Diana updated the board on the current situation with MVP. A small section of the Jefferson National Forest is still off limits for pipeline work because of unresolved environmental concerns. In some other areas, crews are working. Due to various delays, MVP officials now expect to finish construction in late 2019 and considerably over budget.
- b. Digital media handoff: Diana presented an overview of digital tools available to the RATC: Blazer (newsletter), website, Facebook page, Meetup sites, and Google email group. The board may reconsider whether to continue mailing Blazers owing to the high cost (\$2,800 per year for printing and postage). Also mentioned was that the Blazer PDF still needs to be sent to the webmaster to post on the club website and that RATC members should be notified of its availability online through the Google email list.
  - Various sources of club income include PayPal (merchandise), Square (merchandise), and Roanoke Valley Gives (donations). We need someone comfortable with digital media and payment options to handle these. Brendle Wolfe (former membership coordinator) registered RATC as a Roanoke Valley Gives beneficiary two years ago. Press Press Merch handles our online merchandise; VISTA Print produces RATC brochures and business cards.
  - RATC Facebook page includes site analytics (use and page view statistics). Compared with other trail clubs, the RATC page has experienced a large jump in likes and page views between January 2016 and September 2018. Diana suggested posting pictures from work hikes and other core activities on Facebook. Also important to share critical information (e.g., wildfires and trail closures) on Facebook.
  - RATC website has also seen a substantial increase in website traffic. Popular pages include blogs, trail news, and the shuttle list. The Triple Crown page gets the most traffic, with 40,000 visitors to date. Diana noted that the website needs more bloggers.
  - Other observations: Diana recommended the club consider having a presence on Twitter in addition to expanding our website and using other digital tools. Another goal is to encourage people on Meetup to join the club. She is currently working on digitizing the RATC archives. It was suggested that each board member contribute to Roanoke Valley Gives as an example to other club members. Diana is now head of the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy and may no longer continue to serve as vice president of RATC.
- c. 2018 Landsaver Award: On September 9, RATC won the 2018 Landsaver Award from the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy. Diana and Jim Webb attended on behalf of the club. This award recognizes the club's work in building, maintaining, and protecting more than 120 miles of the Appalachian Trail.

## **3. Trail Approval (Jim Webb/David Youmans):**

Jim discussed the illegal blue-blaze trail from Lost Spectacles gap most of the way to the top of Dragon's Tooth. He pointed out that any new trail must have prior approval by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, a biologist, and, if on Forest Service land, by the U.S. Forest Service. Besides being illegal, this trail is very steep with no erosion control. Jim said the blue blazes have been removed and the trail has been brushed in.

## **4. Go Fest (Chris Means):**

Several club members have signed up to help at Roanoke's Go Outside Festival (Go Fest) on October 12-14. Susan Herndon-Powell suggested giving away old RATC T-shirts at the festival and/or to new members. The new Triple Crown shirts will be sold at Go Fest; 100 are ready for sale (\$25 at the festival; \$20 for members). This year we will be using Square for merchandise sales.

**5. AARP/VCOM Health and Wellness Fair (Susan Terwilliger):**

Susan, Jeff Edwards, and Joe Berney set up a RATC exhibit table at the Health and Wellness Fair held on September 19 at the Christiansburg Rec Center. This biennial fair is a mix of businesses and nonprofit exhibitors and is pitched to seniors. The event was well attended, and we handed out a good number of RATC brochures and business cards. A worthwhile outreach event for future years.

**Calendar:**

October 2	ATC and Pacific Crest Trail Association live video, 2pm – 6pm, on Facebook
October 12-14	Go Fest
October 13-14	Chainsaw training (USFS Eastern Divide Office, Blacksburg VA)
October 18	VDOT at VA 311 Bridge Meeting (10 am)
October 20	Virginia Regional Partnership Meeting (Buena Vista VA)
November 5	RATC Board Meeting
December 8	Holiday Potluck

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.