

RATC Board Meeting Minutes
November 4, 2019
Glenvar Branch Library, 3917 Daugherty Road

In Attendance:

Board members: Jim Beeson, Butch Kelly, Bill Neilan, Bob Peckman, Julio Stephens, Susan Terwilliger, Jason Thompson, Mike Vaughn, Homer Witcher, Therese Witcher

Others: None

Meeting was called to order by Jim Beeson at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of October 7 Board Meeting Minutes (Susan Terwilliger):

Corrections: None

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

Treasurer's Report (Terri McClure):

Terri was absent. She sent a preliminary (draft) budget for 2020 to board members on October 22 asking that any changes be submitted to her by November 4. The board must approve the final budget. Terri recommends that the 2020 budget remain revenue neutral (i.e., expenditures match income). Jim Beeson said budget funds should prioritize trail maintenance since that is the main mission of the club. Trail maintenance expenses have increased in recent years because work hikes are now weekly.

Financial activity since last board meeting (as of 11/4/2019):

Total in Checking:	\$45,487.80
Total Monetary Assets:	\$60,202.43
Receipts (YTD):	\$10,471.10
Expenditures (YTD):	\$12,299.38

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

Membership Report (Mark Farrell):

Mark was absent. RATC currently has 650 members, including 11 new members and one renewal from last month's Go Outside Festival. Social media posts, especially on Facebook, are also attracting new members. The board commended Mark for his effective use of pictures taken during trail maintenance, shelter improvements, group hikes, and McAfee Knob Task Force training days. Some of his Facebook posts have exceeded 1,000 views. Jim Beeson asked Jason Thompson if Meetup would share email addresses of people who are on Meetup but are not members of RATC. We could then encourage them to join.

Trail Supervisor's Report (Mike Vaughn):

Trail crews are continuing their work along the McAfee Knob trail with 10 hikes completed to date. One hundred steps have been installed and treadway repair is ongoing. Additionally, 18 new wooden steps are in place north of the fire road's main junction with the Appalachian Trail. Mike said trail crews plan to work near the top of the Dragon's Tooth trail in February and March.

Hikemaster's Report (Josiah Leonard):

Josiah was absent. He reported via email that RATC hosted eight recreational hikes in October. No one earned the 113-mile patch. Josiah wants to move ahead with his proposed hiker recognition program to encourage hiking mileage and participation in group hikes. He has requested that \$100 be allocated for the hiking program in the 2020 budget. He is further requesting an additional \$200 to provide awards for the hiking recognition program and to fund an end-of-season gathering for hike leaders. Josiah also asked that the club again apply for funds from the AT license plate grant program to cover Wilderness First Aid training classes for hike leaders.

Conservation Supervisor's Report (Butch Kelly):

Butch is working with Conner McBane (ATC) on weed control and other sustainability issues. There was a short discussion about the Virginia Tech-backed proposal to install solar panels and wind turbines near the Catawba Sustainability Center. Of particular importance to Appalachian Trail users is whether the panels and turbines would be visible from various overlooks between Dragon's Tooth and Daleville.

Shelter Supervisors' Report (Homer and Therese Witcher):

Jason Thompson donated eight fire rings at a cost of approximately \$1,100. Two of the fire rings were given to the Outdoor Club at Virginia Tech for their two shelters. On October 29, Homer, Therese, and their son Kevin installed new fire rings at Pine Swamp Branch, War Spur, and Bailey Gap shelters. They plan to install new rings at Rice Field and Jenny Knob shelters on November 9. The Doc's Knob shelter will be reroofed on November 24. Therese said this hike will not be posted on Meetup, but those who want to help can meet at Orange Market at 8 a.m. that day.

McAfee Knob Task Force Report (Brian Boggs):

Brian was absent. The McAfee Knob Task Force is holding its end-of-season meeting and social on November 9 at the ATC office in Roanoke. Bill Neilan said more task force members have been active this year, likely due in part to the new mentoring program. Jim Beeson said the volume of trash at McAfee Knob and Dragon's Tooth patrol areas is decreasing, and diapers are no longer regularly dumped in the McAfee Knob porta-johns.

Land Management Supervisor's Report (Bill Neilan):

Bill plans to start working with Josh Kloehn (ATC resource manager) soon.

Newsletter Editor's Report (Anne Pfeiffer):

Anne was absent. She and Bob Peckman collaborated on the most recent (fall 2019) edition of the Blazer. Jim Beeson, on behalf of the RATC Board of Directors, thanked Bob for his many years of service to the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club.

Updates and Action Items

1. Maintainer Reimbursement Committee Report/Dues:

- *Trail maintainer reimbursement committee report:* Julio Stephens, Butch Kelly, Bill Neilan, and Terri McClure are on the committee charged with researching whether and how to reimburse trail and shelter maintainers for mileage when driving to a worksite. Bill said committee members have exchanged many emails over the past few weeks and have come up with the following:
 - \$0.14 per mile is the standard, IRS-approved mileage reimbursement rate for individuals who drive their own vehicles to a worksite. The mileage reimbursement budget will be set at \$500 per year. Julio suggested we revisit this amount in the future and adjust it if needed.

- Only trail maintainers (including shelter maintainers) may claim mileage reimbursement. McAfee Knob Task Force members cannot, nor can board members performing duties other than trail or shelter maintenance. This fund will be set up solely to reimburse trail maintainers.
- Those claiming reimbursement must submit a form within 60 days of the work hike.
- None of the Appalachian Trail maintaining clubs contacted by committee members has a mileage reimbursement policy.
- A discussion followed. Bill said the committee is still considering possibilities and alternatives. Jim Beeson said mileage reimbursement for trail maintainers is a concept item to be discussed and tweaked over time. A formal motion to adopt or reject the proposed mileage reimbursement policy will be made at the next RATC board meeting on January 6, 2020.
- *Membership dues:* The board discussed whether to increase or otherwise change club dues. Jim said RATC falls in the middle range compared to other AT maintaining clubs. Our yearly dues have been the same since the 1980s. Jim suggested making the dues the same whether joining the club or renewing membership. Any change in dues must go before the full membership for a vote at the annual meeting in March.

2. **PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Jim Beeson):**

- a. *Go Fest results:* Despite a shortened festival due to Sunday's poor weather, this year's Go Fest was very successful. Club volunteers sold RATC merchandise, including Triple Crown T-shirts, hats, and red ATC shirts. The Triple Crown shirts sold especially well. An Appalachian Trail-themed game attracted many people to the RATC/ATC tent.
- b. *Property demolition:* Two properties, Lyle (off the McAfee Knob fire road) and Arnie (in Daleville), are scheduled for demolition in December 2019 and January 2020. Both are on National Park Service land. The work will likely be done during the week to avoid most hikers.
- c. *Triple Crown meeting:* In late October there was a meeting involving the U.S. Forest Service, ATC, RATC, and other stakeholders to discuss the Triple Crown and funding resources from the National Park Service. The group took a walking tour of key parts of the Triple Crown, including the Andy Layne trailhead, Dragon's Tooth, and the Boy Scout trail.
 - Jim asked the group to compare amenities at the Dragon's Tooth parking lot with those of the McAfee Knob lot (both on VA 311). Ideally, when the pedestrian bridge is complete, the McAfee Knob lot will be upgraded to the same standard as the Dragon's Tooth lot (i.e., bear-proof trash containers and permanent restrooms).
 - The property just south of the McAfee Knob parking lot (near VA 864) may be available for purchase. Andrew Downs (ATC) is looking into this. This property, which includes land behind the AT, would be ideal for trash receptacles and/or restrooms.
- d. *VA Partnership meeting:* Representatives from seven Virginia AT maintaining clubs attended this meeting on November 2.
 - One issue discussed was NPS's "check-in, check-out" policy. This policy is part of the National Park Service volunteer service agreement requiring Appalachian Trail maintainers covered through NPS insurance to sign in and out at the beginning and end of each workday. It is especially important for people doing section and boundary work alone in areas with poor cellphone service. Group work hikes keep track of people, but there is no formal procedure when individuals go out on their own. The club may need to set up a type

- of “phone tree” for individual workers or use spot devices, popular with through hikers, to call for emergency help or to pinpoint their location.
- o Jim passed around draft pictures of the pedestrian bridge to be built by the Virginia Department of Transportation. The bridge has a scheduled completion date of 2024. Jim explained that although VDOT is building the bridge, it technically belongs to NPS. Although the bridge is part of the Appalachian Trail, RATC will not be responsible for snow removal and technical repairs. We will just need to paint over any graffiti and do other routine chores.
- e. *RATC 2020 annual meeting*: Set for March 21 at the Unitarian Universalist Church (2015 Grandin Road SW, Roanoke). Scott Karns, social chair, will organize.
- f. *Dragon’s Tooth parking lot*: Jim acknowledged Erik Taylor (USFS) for promptly resurfacing and improving some of the Dragon’s Tooth parking lot on VA 311.
- g. *NPS Wayfinding Project*: This project, which is in the second of three phases, will provide consistent signage for McAfee Knob and the surrounding area. The funding is now secure. Signage will appear on highways (including I-81) as well as in the parking lot and on kiosks.
- h. *Appalachian Trail Conservancy Stewardship Council*: The council’s current representative for Virginia trail maintaining clubs is leaving the position in September 2020. RATC has been asked to furnish a replacement. The council meets twice a year in Harper’s Ferry (West Virginia) and has monthly phone calls. The ATC Stewardship Council channels feedback regarding policies and practices from club level up to the ATC.

Calendar:

November 4	RATC board meeting
November 9	McAfee Knob Task Force end-of-season gathering
December 14	RATC holiday party
January 6, 2020	RATC board meeting
February 3, 2020	RATC board meeting
March 13-15, 2020	Southern Partnership meeting, Hungry Mother State Park
March 21, 2020	RATC annual meeting
October 24, 2020	VA Partnership meeting

Meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.