

RATC Board Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2020
Glenvar Branch Library, 3917 Daugherty Road

In Attendance:

Board members: Jim Beeson, Brian Boggs, Mark Farrell, Butch Kelly, Josiah Leonard, Terri McClure, Bill Neilan, Bob Peckman, Anne Pfeiffer, Julio Stephens, Susan Terwilliger, Jason Thompson, Mike Vaughn, Homer Witcher, Therese Witcher

Others: Jonathan Eagle, Jeff Hill

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

Approval of November 4 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 handed out the proposed 2020 budget for review. Board members were asked to check the proposed allocations with the aim of staying revenue neutral where possible. (The budget does not reflect work hikers' possible mileage reimbursement.) There was some discussion of how much to budget for printing and mailing the Trail Blazer newsletter and reminder postcards. Terri noted that since the club now prints and mails fewer Blazers than in the past, it no longer meets the bulk mailing minimum. This means we must budget mailing funds. Printing costs were set at \$1,000 for 2020. Bob Peckman offered to handle postcard mailing. Membership (outreach) funds were set at \$450, as in 2019.

- The 2020 budget reflects an increase in trail maintenance funds. Jim Beeson said this increase is justified because maintaining the trail is the single most important function of RATC. Certain maintenance expenses may also be reimbursed by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, through Andrew Downs.

Financial activity since last board meeting (as of 1/6/2020):

Total in Checking:	\$44,732.33
Total Monetary Assets:	\$59,504.78
Receipts (YTD):	\$12,381.40
Expenditures (YTD):	\$14,714.75

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

Membership Report (Mark Farrell):

The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club currently has 663 members. However, 24% have not paid membership dues since 2018. A brief discussion followed on how to get these people back in the fold. In early December, Jim Beeson emailed all 1,700 RATC Meetup members to encourage non-RATC members to join the club. To date, five have done so. Bill Neilan observed that some Meetup members live out of town and are not likely to join. Mark reported that RATC's Facebook page has attracted huge viewership. A recent post of a trail crew finishing work on the McAfee Knob trail got 57,000 views.

- Mark is moving to San Diego this month. Jim wished Mark well and thanked him for all his hard work and for serving RATC in many different capacities. Bill will handle membership coordinator tasks until a new person can be found.

Trail Supervisor's Report (Mike Vaughn):

On December 30, the last work hike of 2019 was completed on the McAfee Knob trail. There were 18 total work hikes in this area, with 176 steps installed and more than 1,000 work hours logged. Mike said trail crews will move to the

Dragon's Tooth trail in February and March. Today, a crew worked on trail improvements near VA 785. Jim Beeson commented that all these work hikes have greatly enhanced trail quality.

Hikemaster's Report (Josiah Leonard):

Josiah gave an end-of-year review. There were five group hikes last month and 75 in all for 2019, led by 25 different hike leaders. This year saw more broad-based participation with a good variety of hikes (distance, difficulty, location, etc.). A strong improvement over previous years – due in part to Josiah's reaching out to hike leaders. Some hikes attracted only a few participants; others had far more. The average was five hikers per hike, with an average hike length of 8 to 9 miles. A broad geographic area was covered, with the Channels hike requiring the longest driving distance.

- Josiah is moving to Florida in February. Jim Beeson thanked Josiah for his contributions to RATC's group hiking program, especially for recruiting more hike leaders and increasing hike participation.

Conservation Supervisor's Report (Butch Kelly):

Butch plans to work in the Burrus Tract area this winter to enhance golden wing warbler habitat, among other things. A biological evaluation on the Catawba side trail (from the fire road to the Sustainability Center) has been completed with no major problems found. Bill Neilan attended a follow-up meeting in December concerning possible placement of wind turbines and solar panels near the McAfee Knob trail. (The first meeting was held on September 25.) Better photos pinpointing the location of the solar panels and wind turbines were displayed. However, it is unclear whether this project will actually happen given its current leadership.

Shelter Supervisors' Report (Homer and Therese Witcher):

New fire rings were installed at Rice Field and Jenny Knob shelters on November 9. Doc's Knob shelter was reroofed on November 24. Homer reported that at least 12 potentially dangerous trees were taken down recently near the Lambert's Meadow shelter. Homer, Therese, and several other volunteers evaluated, photographed, and reported vandalism to the Fullhardt Knob shelter in early December. This included a broken toilet seat, burn holes from a fire started in the shelter, and other damage. ATC license plate funds helped pay for repairs. National Park Service Ranger Brian Wilson called in an official report. Jim Beeson commended Homer and Therese for their prompt action in dealing with this incident.

McAfee Knob Task Force Report (Brian Boggs):

The McAfee Knob Task Force held its end-of-season meeting and social on November 9 at the ATC office in Roanoke. Ridgerunner coverage of McAfee Knob and Dragon's Tooth this year was similar to last year. The McAfee Knob parking lot has been damaged by someone doing "donuts." Ranger Wilson and others are trying to catch the perpetrator.

Land Management Supervisor's Report (Bill Neilan):

In early December, Josh Kloehn (ATC), Conner McBane (ATC), Jim Webb, and Bill did some boundary work. They covered about 3 miles of the Appalachian Trail boundary along the west end of Carvins Cove. In some areas, paint has faded from trees that previously marked boundaries.

Newsletter Editor's Report (Anne Pfeiffer):

Anne asked board members for items for the Trail Blazer. She is especially interested in human interest stories to supplement recreational and work hike reports. Jim Beeson asked the board to submit content and photos to Anne each quarter (this week for the upcoming winter issue).

Updates and Action Items

1. Dues/Maintainer Reimbursement

- a. *Dues:* The board discussed whether to modify yearly membership dues. Currently, dues are \$20 for a new individual membership, \$15 to renew; \$25 for a new family membership, \$20 to renew. Jim Beeson

proposed making annual membership dues the same whether new or renewing: \$20 for individuals and \$25 for families. Butch Kelly made a motion to that effect, Bob Peckman seconded, and the motion passed. The revised policy must be approved by the RATC membership at the March 21 annual meeting.

- The revised policy will provide more money for trail maintenance and property acquisition. It also simplifies cost structure and will help eliminate deficit spending. The policy, if approved by RATC membership, will take effect with 2021 memberships.
- b. *Maintainer reimbursement*: Bill Neilan distributed a handout that summarized the basic proposal: that RATC members participating in trail or shelter maintenance hikes who drive their personal vehicle to the work site and back may request reimbursement from the club of \$.10 per mile. The budgeted total for one year is \$500. The RATC Board of Directors will review the program after one year and decide whether to continue it. Requesting reimbursement is strictly voluntary; no one is required to do so. A motion was made to allow work hike drivers to request reimbursement, it was seconded, and the motion passed.
 - Driving distance is determined from the Meetup point to the work site or trailhead. Only carpool drivers will be reimbursed (according to mileage, not gas costs).
 - Terri McClure asked whether she has to approve distances for reimbursement. She is concerned about IRS rules and reporting requirements.
 - Butch suggested writing down odometer readings or using Google Maps to verify distances.
 - Jim Beeson noted that, to his knowledge, no other AT clubs have adopted this policy.

2. RATC Website (Jonathan Eagle)

In August, Jonathan noticed that certain menu items on the RATC website (ratc.org) were invisible on a smartphone. He has rebuilt the main menu, making all the menu items more easily accessible from a mobile phone. RATC's Meetup calendar is in the process of being resynched with the website so Meetup events can be seen by visitors to the RATC website. He is attempting to do this without incurring a significant increase in Meetup fees. A major upgrade is coming for the website theme that RATC uses to allow WordPress to render the site as it does. Significant changes to the website may be necessary to be displayed properly with the new theme.

3. PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Jim Beeson):

- a. *VA 311 property*: Jim is meeting on Friday, January 10, with Andrew Downs concerning the purchase of a house and 7 acres of land just off the McAfee Knob parking lot. ATC is in middle of a fundraising campaign to raise money for this purpose. The total needed for both house and land is about \$200,000. This land could be used for permanent restrooms, bear-proof trash containers, and parking lot improvements. Jim said purchase of this property represents a generational opportunity to improve the Appalachian Trail in the McAfee Knob area. RATC has already committed \$5,000 toward this purchase. After some discussion, Bob Peckman moved to increase RATC's contribution to \$10,000. Jim seconded, and the motion passed.
- b. *Membership/hikemaster positions*: As mentioned above, these positions will soon be vacant since the current membership coordinator and hikemaster are leaving the area. Replacements are being sought.
- c. *2020 RATC Board of Directors*: Jim said he is assuming all current board members will keep their roles next year except for those known to be leaving.
- d. *Backpacker magazine*: Effective this year, all RATC members will receive a subscription to *Backpacker* magazine at no additional cost. Jim has finalized a deal with magazine staff to make this happen.
- e. *RATC 2020 annual meeting*: This year's annual meeting will be on March 21 at the Unitarian Universalist Church (2015 Grandin Road SW, Roanoke). Scott Karns, social chair, will organize.
- f. *2019 holiday potluck*: This gathering, held on December 14, was well attended. Bob and Kris Peckman showed pictures of their trip to the Grand Canyon. Tim Lewis, a local hiker, runner, and photographer, sold copies of his McAfee Knob-themed calendar and donated the proceeds to the Virginia 311 property fund.

- g. *311 bridge meeting*: Scheduled for January 14. Jim will get an update on the progress of the pedestrian bridge to be built by the Virginia Department of Transportation and completed by 2024.

Calendar:

January 14	VA 311 bridge meeting - VDOT
February 3	RATC board meeting
March 13-15	Southern Partnership meeting - Hungry Mother State Park
March 21	RATC annual meeting
October 24	VA Partnership meeting

Meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.