

RATC Board Meeting Minutes

April 6, 2020

Online format (through Zoom)

In Attendance:

Board members: Jim Beeson, Brian Boggs, Terri McClure, Bill Neilan, Julio Stephens, Susan Terwilliger, Mike Vaughn, Homer Witcher, Therese Witcher, Brendle Wolfe

Others: Andrew Downs, Brian Wilson

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

Approval of February 3 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):

Membership dues have dropped since the last board meeting, along with contributions to the VA 311 McAfee Knob property fund. RATC, individually and collectively, has contributed \$31,655 to this fund to date. Jim Beeson and Terri briefly discussed whether to contact members who have not paid their dues since 2018. Terri said this might be unwise since many people are in financial distress. Jim said we still need to remind members that their membership has expired. Brendle Wolfe said more than a reminder postcard is needed to reach people in arrears.

Financial activity since last board meeting (as of 4/6/2020):

Total in Checking: \$54,920.97

Total Monetary Assets: \$69,635.75

Receipts (YTD): \$13,674.51

Expenditures (YTD): \$3,486.27

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

Membership Report: (Steve Urbaniak)

Steve did not attend.

Trail Supervisor's Report (Mike Vaughn):

Mike said six work hikes were completed near Dragon's Tooth from early February until trail work was halted in mid-March. Work crews will return to this area when trail maintenance resumes.

Hikemaster's Report (Bob Peckman):

Bob did not attend.

Conservation Supervisor's Report (Butch Kelly):

Butch did not attend.

Shelter Supervisors' Report (Homer and Therese Witcher):

Homer and Therese recently checked all shelters in our section. They painted over graffiti at Pine Swamp Branch and Bailey Gap shelters and serviced the Niday shelter's moldering privy (with the help of a small crew). This work occurred before March 15.

McAfee Knob Task Force Report (Brian Boggs):

Brian had no updates.

Land Management Supervisor's Report (Bill Neilan):

Bill had no updates.

Newsletter Editor's Report (Anne Pfeiffer):

Anne did not attend. She needs articles and any other Blazer submissions by April 7.

Updates and Action Items (Jim Beeson)

1. COVID-19 Update

- Brian Wilson (National Park Service) reported on the many closures resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. Wendy Janssen, superintendent of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, has ordered the Triple Crown area (including shelters and privies) to be closed between VA 624 and VA 652. The entire Appalachian Trail may close. There are signs warning of closures, and barricades are proposed to keep hikers out of parking lots. Brian is trying to arrange to have large boulders placed within the McAfee Knob lot to discourage parking, both in the lot and along the road. (Dragon's Tooth lot already has a barricade in place.) The intention is to discourage the public from hiking in these popular areas during the shutdown. Brian also reported that some parts of Shenandoah National Park have closed.
- A discussion ensued on whether closing less-crowded parts of the AT makes sense. Some board members stated that the decision to close the entire trail was overkill and people should still have the right to hike and exercise during the pandemic. Brian and Andrew Downs (Appalachian Trail Conservancy) pointed out that not only is social distancing a problem in popular areas such as McAfee Knob, Tinker Cliffs, and Dragon's Tooth, but injured hikers requiring medical help would strain the healthcare resources of trail towns. Andrew has heard from several town officials who are very concerned about adverse effects on their towns. The consensus is that closing the AT is simply the necessary thing to do despite the inconvenience to hikers – especially through hikers – and others who work and play on the trail.
- Jim asked Brian what RATC could do to help inform the public to stay off the trail in the Triple Crown area. Brian will let us know if and when our help is needed.

2. Konnarock Update

Andrew Downs said the Konnarock crew, which would normally spend several weeks in RATC's section, will not be coming this year because of the coronavirus outbreak. The Mountain Lake relocation and other Konnarock work projects may be completed later in the year by other volunteers.

3. Membership Dues – Lifetime Amount

Jim asked the board to consider raising the individual lifetime membership fee from \$250 to \$300 and the family lifetime membership fee from \$300 to \$350. Lifetime member dues are likely to be less over time than dues paid each year, which may create a cashflow problem.

4. VA 311 Property Update

Andrew Downs reported that the plan to purchase this property is still in the works. He is meeting with the landowner this week and hopes to secure a contract later this year. Jim said an RATC member has pledged \$10,000 with a possibility of further matching funds. The ATC has made \$25,000 to \$35,000 available for this purchase, mostly from the Cox Conserves prize won earlier by Diana Christopulos. Fundraising efforts are on hold until after the COVID-19 pandemic passes. The current economic climate makes it difficult to ask people for money.

5. Spring Blazer

As stated above, Anne Pfeiffer needs all submissions to the newsletter by April 7.

6. 2020 Annual Meeting

The March 28 annual meeting, at which RATC 2020 Board of Directors officers would have been elected, was canceled due to COVID-19. It will be rescheduled at a later date (possibly at the summer Corn Boil). In the meantime, the May and June club meetings will be held through the Zoom conferencing platform.

7. LL Bean Grants – April 10

Mike Vaughn has submitted a request to LL Bean for \$1,000 to purchase a rock drill. This tool is very helpful with certain trail maintenance tasks. Currently, the club is using the personal drill of a work crew member.

8. ATC Check in – Check out (April 13)

This policy, first discussed at the board meeting on November 4, 2019, requires trail maintainers to sign in and out at the beginning and end of each workday. The policy is mandated under NPS’s Volunteer Service Agreement. It is especially important for individuals working on their own who are not part of a group work hike. Input on this policy from the board is required by April 13. Jim will send specific information to board members.

Calendar:

May 4	RATC board meeting (Zoom)
June 8	RATC board meeting (Zoom)
September	Volunteer Leadership Meeting (ATC)
October 24	VA Partnership meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.