

RATC Board Meeting Minutes

May 3, 2021

Online format (through Zoom)

In Attendance:

Board members: Andrew Bowman, Ron Bradbury, Dee Case, Mark Farrell, Terri McClure, Bill Neilan, Susan Terwilliger, Jason Thompson, Mike Vaughn, Homer Witcher, Therese Witcher, Brendle Wolfe

Others: Diana Christopulos, Jill Pennington

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Neilan at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of April 12 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):

The club collected about \$500 in membership dues and spent approximately \$3,400 for bridge repairs and other trail maintenance last month.

Financial activity since last board meeting (as of 5/3/2021):

Total in Checking: \$51,835.76

Total Monetary Assets: \$66,550.93

Receipts (YTD): \$9,427.95

Expenditures (YTD): \$2,189.94

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

Membership Report (Mark Farrell):

RATC currently has 714 members, with several new members joining in April. A drive-in movie event in conjunction with Roanoke Parks and Recreation had to be canceled. Fabric patches for new members continue to be unavailable from Press Press Merch. Bill Neilan and Mark discussed possible remedies, including seeking a new vendor.

Visitor Use Management Update (Diana Christopulos):

Diana updated the board on the Visitor Use Management (VUM) initiative. VUM, through the National Park Service (NPS), seeks to create a "desired future" for heavily visited sections of the Appalachian Trail. Money is available through a three-year grant for this purpose. The final plan will be completed in 2023. Input is needed from RATC leaders – especially Bill Neilan, Mike Vaughn, Homer Witcher, and Therese Witcher – to accurately guide this plan in Virginia's Triple Crown area. A related program, the NPS's Visual Resource Inventory, assesses quality of views and seeks to protect the AT from threats.

- Diana also updated the board on the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP)'s treatment plan for the right-of-way (ROW) visible from the AT, whether the AT is on federal or private land. In this plan, a formal agreement with the National Park Service, MVP has made an unprecedented agreement to reduce the barest part of the corridor to about 10 feet of width. The cleared ROW is normally 125 feet during construction and 50 feet after construction. In addition, MVP will plant native shrubs and small trees in an undulating pattern instead of a straight line.
- Diana, RATC archivist, also described the club's role in creating the AT in the 1930s. She has discovered maps and descriptions of how the AT was rerouted away from the Blue Ridge Parkway. Diana's long-term goal is to organize and scan archival materials to allow online searches.

Trail Supervisor's Report (Mike Vaughn):

Mike announced that 2022 will mark RATC's 90th birthday. The Konnarock crew, minus volunteers, will work on the Mountain Lake relocation project in May and July. The club recently received a \$6,500 grant from NPS for trail equipment and training. Recent work hikes have been on Sawtooth Ridge, south of the McAfee Knob parking lot. Over the summer, work crews will be visiting different sites for two or three weeks at a time. Chainsaw recertification classes are coming up.

Hikemaster's Report (Jennifer Frye):

Jennifer did not attend. So far, only one hike leader has led recreational hikes this spring. Current COVID restrictions do not allow carpooling, which has made organizing group hikes more difficult.

Conservation Supervisor's Report (Butch Kelly):

Butch did not attend.

Shelter Supervisors' Report (Homer and Therese Witcher):

The Wapiti shelter rehab happened mostly on April 23 with a follow-up effort the next day. The 23rd was a marathon work day: eight new logs were brought in, pillars put up, asphalt shingles removed from the shelter and privy, a new metal roof was installed on both shelter and privy, and the shelter was stained. A borate treatment was also applied to control wood-boring insects.

McAfee Knob Task Force Report (Dee Case):

Suzanne Neal, the new Catawba Mountain Ridgerunner, began work April 19. A virtual training day for new Ridgerunners took place on April 24. Several Triple Crown orientation hikes have been scheduled for May.

Land Management Supervisor's Report (Kevin Moore):

Kevin did not attend. He will likely not have much to report until this fall and winter, when boundary work is done.

Newsletter Editor's Report (Ron Bradbury):

The 2021 spring edition of the Trail Blazer was published on April 22. The summer edition will appear in June. Only 66 printed copies are currently mailed to members requesting them. Bill Neilan said eventually, the Blazer will be available only online.

Updates (Bill Neilan)**1. Julio Stephens**

Julio is taking some time off from the RATC board and hopes to return soon.

2. Peters Mountain Trail Closure

Powerline repairs on a 15-mile section of the AT between Clendennin Road near Pearisburg and Pine Swamp Branch shelter are complete, and the trail has reopened. A wildfire south of Dragon's Tooth (between VA 620 and VA 621) briefly closed 7 miles of the AT around May 1.

3. AT Shelter and Privy Closure

AT shelters and privies in southern Virginia, closed for a year because of the coronavirus pandemic, are now officially open.

4. McAfee Knob Porta-Johns

No date has been set for the return of the two porta-johns to the McAfee Knob trailhead parking lot.

5. Ironman 70.3 Virginia's Blue Ridge

The Ironman competition will be held on June 6 near Roanoke. There will be many visitors to our area the entire weekend, which gives RATC an opportunity to publicize the club. We may set up a donation table on race day.

Calendar:

June 7: RATC board meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.