AMC NH Chapter – Minutes

Meeting Date: March 7, 2013; 7:00

Meeting Location: Holiday Inn, Manchester, NH

Members in Attendance:

Karen Thurston         Chair
Wayne Goertel          Vice Chair
√ Bill Warren          Treasurer
√ Beth Zimmer          Secretary
√ Gene Harding         Bike Chair
√ Paul Hopkins         Conservation
√ Eric Savage          Education Chair; Past Chair
Leon Tokatlian         Excursions Co-Chair
Jennifer Varney        Excursions Co-Chair
√ Patty Anderson       Hospitality Chair
√ Mitch Manseau        Membership Co-Chair
√ Marianne Page        Membership Co-Chair
√ Jim Kent             Mountaineering Co-Chair
Tom Sintros            Mountaineering Co-Chair
David Phillips         Newsletter Editor
Susan Englert          Newsletter Editor
√ Sally Leonard        Paddling Co-Chair
Marcy Stanton          Paddling Co-Chair
√ Paul Berry           Programs Co-Chair
√ Marie Berry          Programs Co-Chair
√ "Sam" Ruth Jamke      Regional Director, North (NH & ME)
Tony Schmidt           Ski Co-Chair
Valerio Viti           Ski Co-Chair
Richie Holstein        Trails Chair
√ Tom Todd             Webmaster
√ John Green           Young Members Chair
Roger Scholl           AMC Staff Liaison
√ Rick Silverberg      Guest / Outdoor Leadership Development
6:30PM: Dinner

7:00PM: Eric Savage called the meeting to order.

Approval of Dec. ’12 & Feb. ’13 Minutes / Beth Zimmer

B. Zimmer had sent out minutes to ExComm members via prior e-mails. A motion was made by G. Harding to approve the minutes as presented; it was seconded by S. Leonard; the motion was approved unanimously.


B. Warren had sent out treasurer reports to ExComm members via prior e-mails. The reports were received without question or comment.

Calendar Items

The Pot Luck Dinner as originally scheduled was snowed out. It has been rescheduled to March 16, 2013.

The AMC-NH dinner meeting with Willem Lange on April 20, 2013 occurs on the same date as NH Fish & Game’s Wild NH Day. This allows us to get Willem Lange as a speaker without incurring extra travel costs. There are already 40 participants signed up. P. Berry is working with NH F&G staff regarding having a NH Chapter table at the event. P. Berry is seeking volunteers to staff the table. (This is also the same weekend as Spring School at Cardigan Lodge.)

Report from the Ad Hoc Finance Committee

At the Chapter’s February budget review meeting, we formed an ad hoc committee to further discuss some long-reaching budget topics and sought some volunteers to participate with the goal of forming proposals for a budget strategy over the next several years. We had a very good discussion, which we expect to be the first of many. Our team consisted of:

- Bill Warren, Treasurer
• Eric Savage, Past Chair & Education
• Jim Kent, Mountaineering
• Paul Berry, Programs
• Tom Todd, Webmaster
• Wayne Goertel, Vice Chair

We agreed on some spending and budget philosophy, and reached consensus on several proposals. We're all volunteers ourselves, so we want keep the budget process simple and effective.

1. **Retain reasonable reserves of chapter & committee assets.**
   As discussed in February, we want to find an appropriate balance between retaining minimal reserves, but not retaining excessive funds that could instead be judiciously utilized to support our mission.

   **For chapter assets, we recommend a 16 month reserve.** This is a one year base, plus four more months to align with our thrice-yearly distribution of dues from the club. For an anticipated $40k yearly dues allocation, we’d want to have a reserve of approximately $54k. With the club distributions every four months and variable demand for reimbursement, Bill Warren expressed concern about going below $15k in the chapter checkbook. This matches well with our ~$40k saved in the club's invested reserves.

   (The reserves discussed here do not include endowments or the assets of individual committees. Guidance on committee reserves will need further discussion with wider participation.)

   **Discussion:** There was general agreement with the judgment of the ad hoc committee. P. Anderson made a motion to accept the Ad Hoc Finance Committee’s recommendation #1; this was seconded by B. Zimmer; it was approved unanimously.

2. **Categorize committee budget items into three categories.**
   a. Operational Expenses
   b. Ongoing Training Expenses
c. 'Capital' Expenses or other Extraordinary Expenses

Our committees will have expenses in various combinations of these three categories. We noted a distinction between "activity" committees (Biking, Excursions, Mountaineering, etc.) and "service" committees (Conservation, Trails, etc.), in that many activity committees have a chance to generate income whereas service committees may not.

**Discussion**: This item is somewhat administrative in nature, and only will impact “how” budgets are presented in the future. Not all committees will present budget items in all three categories. Due to the administrative nature of this recommendation, it was felt that a vote to approve it was not necessary.

3. **Strive to maintain a balanced budget for operational & ongoing training expenses.**

The budgeted expenses for these two categories should not exceed our projected income. Utilizing our savings for ongoing expenses creates a trap, in which committees may get accustomed to a year-to-year budget that is not sustainable after we've spent down to our reserves target.

**Discussion**: It will be expected that Operational and Training budget items or expenses will be offset from Chapter income, and that we will seek to present and approve a balanced budget. M. Barry made a motion that operational and ongoing expenses be contained in a balanced budget and that extraordinary items be brought forward separately; this was seconded by S. Leonard; it was approved unanimously.

4. **Guidance on spending money for ‘capital’ and extraordinary activities.**

Spending from savings should be reserved for activities and equipment that create lasting impact, and give leverage for increased outreach. One example is increasing the level of training of a committee, such as multi-year initiatives to certify leader groups, as we've begun for Skiing and Mountaineering. Once "leveled up", we'd expect those committees to fund ongoing training to keep leaders at that level. Another example is our $2,500 matching contribution last year to restore the Old Bridal Path after hurricane damage.
We can sponsor new fledgling committees until they can become self-sustaining. Obtaining rental equipment can lower the initial cost burden for new activity participants. There are many ideas for spending from savings, but we should only act upon those that meet high standards. (Invested reserves can be available to support new committees not yet materialized.)

**Discussion**: There was general consensus that the Chapter needs to set a higher bar for expenses in this (“extraordinary expenses that lead to lasting outcomes”) category.

Unusual expenses, which we could refer to as “capital expenses,” will come out of our invested reserves. We need to engage in conversation that asks, “Does this capital expense (i.e., additional canoes) move us to a new level? Other examples of extraordinary requests or expenditures might include: funding a new program, purchasing a tool trailer, supporting a training ‘push’ to get all members of a committee up to a new level of skill. There was general agreement that expenses in this area should be viewed as “an investment in the future” and should not be a form of ongoing expense.

5. **The club needs to help fund their pillars through the chapters.**

When AMC President John Judge proposed the fifth pillar to the Vision 2020 program, "Excellence in Leadership", we understand this was after the 2013 club budget cycle. The NH chapter must agitate, along with other chapters, to get club financing to support chapter pursuit of these pillar initiatives in the club’s 2014 budget. We want the club to "put their money where their mouth is", to help us help them help get people outdoors!

Our ad hoc committee liked the idea of seeking matching funds, so the club and chapters partner in funding activities they both feel have significant impact.

**Discussion**: One example of the above was when the Club asked chapters to get more children outdoors, and the Chapter bought additional, smaller kayaks to make paddling more accessible to children. We perhaps could have written a grant and not fronted this expense upfront.

A challenge for us has been to improve our training and develop excellent leaders. The chapter has put the financial supports all up front. Will the Club be supporting
this at all? R. Silverberg shared that the Club has earmarked money, in the form of a grant, for a cross chapter leadership gathering (“train the trainers”). J. Kent offered an example that if the Club wanted the chapters to expand training, the Club could earmark a portion of the dues allocation to the chapter to draw from for such training. S. Jamke noted that not all chapters are in the same financial situation; some chapters have very deep financial reserves.

Discussion continued, with the question being, “Is this the direction we want Chapter leadership and representatives to proceed in their interactions at the Club level?”

There was general agreement that the Chapter would like the Club to look at their initiatives and how it will support funding of those goals. A few members noted that it sometimes appears as if the money goes to professionals, but the ‘work’ is done by volunteers. T. Todd noted that he would like to see more resources going to the volunteers.

P. Berry noted that the club may not see their goals as mandates and that perhaps there are not as many mandates as we might think.

6. **Streamline the budget.**

Let’s fold special budget items back into the appropriate sponsoring committees. SOLO training is not committee specific, and seems a good fit under the Education budget. One has to hike to attend a hut night, so it seems a natural fit under Excursions (or perhaps another committee). There are reasons certain activities had been called out separately in past budgets, but there is greater consistency if all budget items have a home under a committee or under ExComm.

**Discussion / Reaction:**

- B. Warren noted that in future budgets, we will be asking committees to provide narratives
- The committee members wanted to know if the above recommendations are at a point where we are ready for a motion, or do they need more work / discussion
- Is the notion of a balanced budget amenable to the committee? We cannot sustain large losses year after year. The Ad Hoc Committee didn’t want to go too far with its recommendations.
The concluding informal consensus was that a variety of smaller Ad Hoc Committees will be formed to address the above.

**Regional Director Report Out / Sam Jamke**

S. Jamke shared that the primary topic at the May 2013 retreat will be regarding the “fifth strategy / initiative” - *Advancing Excellence in Outdoor Recreation and Leadership Training*. The Chair and Vice Chair will also be attending.

**Food**

A big thank you went out to the Mountaineering Committee for tonight’s dinner of Sal’s Pizza, fruit and cookies. At our April meeting, the Membership Committee will next in line to provide dinner.

**Discussion to form Ad Hoc Committees to address questions raised at February’s Budget meeting**

By way of e-mail, K. Thurston, Chair, had sent members some suggestions to consider:

1. **Education**: What does this really mean (education of staff, members, events, etc.)?

   **Discussion**: E. Savage shared that this will be his last meeting and that he will be stepping down as Education Chair. With his remaining time being finite, he agreed to chair an ad hoc committee; there will be others who will want to participate on this committee. An e-mail will be sent out.

2. **Mountain Passages**: What is the future direction of our newsletter?

   **Discussion** deferred.

3. **Clothing & Fleece**: Vision of branding, present and future inventory, transition to a new sales model, and the like?

   **Discussion** deferred.

4. **Huts Nights**: Should this activity fall under Excursions? To what extent should the Chapter underwrite participant costs?
Discussion deferred until there is representation from Excursions.

5. **Annual Meeting**: targeted number of attendees, location, door prizes, subsidizing ExComm, etc.

   **Discussion**: The Programs Committee will come back next month with a proposal.

**Topics for Future Meetings:**

- (Feb 2013) “Education” - what does this really mean (education of staff, members, events, etc.).
- (Feb 2013) Future direction of our newsletter Mt. Passages.
- (Feb 2013) Clothing & Fleece: vision of branding, present and future inventory, transition to a new sales model, and the like.
- (Feb 2013) Huts Nights: Should this activity fall under Excursions? To what extent should the Chapter underwrite participant costs?
- (Feb 2013) Annual meeting: door prizes; subsidizing attendance; etc.
- (Dec 2012) How to use the online activities / etools Club wide.
- (Dec 2012) How to offer CPR to trip leaders.
- (Dec 2012) How to capture individuals at the Winter Expo, facilitate immediate online registration, and connect folks up with events they might be interested in, fostering that enthusiasm “in the moment.”

**Next Meeting**

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 4, 2013.

*Minutes: Beth Zimmer*