

Minutes
Electronic Board Meeting
September 17, 2019

1. Meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. EDT by President David Bonewitz.
2. All were present except for Atlantic Region RD. Representing the National Office (NO) were Henry Rosales and Erin Grosso. North Central DRD Susan Pinneke also participated, as did 2021 Convention Chair Jerry Wilson and 2019 Convention Co-chair Teresa Kennedy. A quorum was declared.
3. Minutes of the August 17, 2019, in-person meeting were approved as corrected.
4. The Board approved by consensus July 10-12, 2020, for an in-person meeting in Madison, Wisconsin. The 2021 Convention Committee can take this date forward. Henry and Erin will visit Madison soon to start working contracts.
5. Teresa Kennedy, 2019 Convention Co-chair, presented the after-action report (attached). David thanked Teresa and her committee for a great job. Some highlights and discussion:
 - The 2019 Convention Committee formed quickly after winning the bid in 2017, recruited committee chairs, and began monthly meetings. The committee selected the theme of Walk Through History and wove the theme through all activities and merchandise. The committee worked to be as fiscally prudent as possible to avoid losing money for AVA. They borrowed whatever possible to avoid having to rent and got numerous donations, some of which can be recycled for the next Convention.
 - More than 600 people attended, and there were more than 140 volunteers, who were easily recognized by their bright yellow vests. Butch Spaulding (NC RD) asked about participation in swims and bikes. Teresa replied bike response was about 12 in each location, while swim participants numbered around 100.
 - Carl Cordes (PA RD), who was emcee for the awards banquet, suggested the next convention need not include entertainment after the meal, as people tend not to stay. Reasons may include that they have already checked out of the hotel or that they want an early night before a long drive to the next day's post-convention walk. One remedy may be to move the banquet from Friday to Thursday.
 - John McClellan (SE RD) offered several comments:
 - The report contains good info for the next convention. From the Board perspective, the emphasis on a national event needs to be expanded. To attract the fitness community, we need a Board/NO effort to find corporate sponsorship. David agreed that the next convention needs to focus on outreach as a primary goal.
 - The convention committee did a good job working with other clubs to the extent the 2019 convention was more than a national convention; it also felt regional in that participants were exposed to the whole region.
 - The base of 140 volunteers should be noted for future conventions.
 - Turnout was better than in recent conventions, but concern over capacity of transportation/parking indicated worry. We need to expect thousands at the next convention.

- It would be useful to have statistics on training participation. Also, recording training sessions would be valuable those unable to attend the convention.
- Erin Grosso (NO): Collaboration between the host and the NO worked quite well and resulted in about \$11K in donations for the convention.
- David Bonewitz (President): AVA offers good walks/great people, but we need to market social opportunities more.
- Cecilia Miner (Secretary) noted some clubs have been estimating the economic benefit events bring to communities in terms of airplane tickets, hotel nights, meals bought, etc. Susan Pinneke said the Des Moines convention did that, estimating about \$1M. Henry noted the local convention and visitor bureau likely has an economic estimator to help compile a report. Nancy Wittenberg (VP) added that projecting economic benefit may help AVA get money from the region to help bring people in.
- Henry Rosales (ED): The decision to give back per participant funds to clubs was a good way to gain support from clubs.

6. Erin Grosso (NO) provided a review of year-end financials, noting there would not be an audit at the close of this year. John McClellan noted there were several positive upticks but added that if the Convention had not been a moneymaker, the balance sheet would not have been as rosy. In terms of numbers for overall participation, if each event had had an additional four participants, we would have made our numbers in the budget.

7. Board Support to Texas Trail Roundup, Crazy Horse, and U.S. FreedomWalk Festival. David encouraged the Board to participate to show national presence, meet people not part of the organization, and expose the public to AVA. David called for expected Board attendance.

- Fall Crazy Horse (last Sunday in September): None. We will notify the club.
- U.S. FreedomWalk Festival: Secretary, PA RD, SC RD
- Texas Trail Roundup: President, Vice President, Secretary, SC RD, SE RD, SW RD, PA RD, ED, Jerry Wilson. Henry noted there will be an open house on Thursday prior, and he is working on a press conference in downtown San Antonio, also probably on Thursday around 3 or 4.
- June Crazy Horse: President, Vice President, tentatively PA RD, Jerry Wilson
- Bob Buzolich (MA RD) mentioned the Labor Day event in Mackinaw, Michigan. This year, there were only 13 volkssporters registered as of the week before according to the Michigan Pathfinders (host club). The event promotes walking in Michigan and supports the Governor's health initiatives. Henry said we should look at ways to support. Since it's not specifically a volkssport event, our opportunity would be to provide AVA exposure to other walkers. Bob suggested having an information tent on both ends of the bridge and having walkers wear "Come walk with me" shirts.
- John McClellan asked if national events can get more attention on the website. Henry answered that October 1 is the target to roll out new website.
- Tom Baltes (NW RD) stated the Northwest has events like Mackinaw where volkssport events are sanctioned alongside other events. Some clubs do provide an information table.

8. Status of Bylaws, Certificate of Formation, and Board Handbook: David is compiling a summary of Bylaws and Certificate of Formation above that supplied by the attorney. David will forward to Henry this week and work on the Board Handbook. Chase Davis (Treasurer) and

others volunteered to help work on the Board Handbook. David will work to get the bylaws/certificate summary to clubs by the end of October, both the summary and the full redline version. Nancy suggested the full versions be supplied online in a special edition of the Checkpoint to avoid printing costs.

9. Progress on GroupWorks (GW) Membership Referral Test

Carl Cordes reported CA and AZ were listed as test sites. Henry said the pilot has been put on hold pending review of the rollout. While GW works on its refocus, Henry said we should ensure the clubs are able to handle referrals and follow up in a way that those referred will have a good experience. John McClellan stressed that clubs need to have an IT capacity if GW is the company hosting us and providing referrals. The Board needs to lead the effort and assist clubs as needed or GW will move on, and AVA will lose the opportunity.

10. Other topics:

- David will not be joining the America Walks (AW) Board but will continue to work with AW at a functional level.
- Henry is expecting two proposals on new business models in the next few weeks. He will then work with Nancy on the fund development committee. Expect an update at the next meeting.
- Henry reported the new logo was nearly ready. The Marketing Committee wants to start using it as soon as it is approved. David proposed Henry send out the logo for a vote by e-mail so the logo, if approved, would be available for FreedomWalk.
- John McClellan: RDs/DRDs got e-mail from Robert McDaniel (his deputy) with information on an IBM program to train IT people on developing a website. Need to register by September 19.

11. Meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m. EDT. The next EBM will be Tuesday, October 22, at 10:00 a.m. EDT. Nancy will chair, as David will be away.

Respectfully submitted,

Cecilia Miner
AVA Secretary

Attachment: 2019 Convention After-action Report

2019 Convention

History

ESCV pursued the convention bid in 2015 and again in 2017, when it was awarded to us. We felt an obligation to the national membership to host in the northeast, as a convention had never been held in this area.

First item of the Planning Committee was picking a unique theme that would be threaded throughout our walks, mascot, socials, banquet decorations, logo, etc., to bring cohesiveness to the 2019 Convention. Our theme of Walk Thru History drove all decisions related to events. We feel we were very successful in this endeavor.

We established a working committee consisting of 14 committee chairs and met monthly to build a cohesive working team with camaraderie. Our minutes were sent to AVA, President of AVA, all POCs for pre, convention and post walks and all of the Northeast club presidents. This helped us to be open and honest with our assessments, whether they be positive or negative. We used a Google drive document, so chairs could easily share information with one another. We recommend having monthly planning meetings.

Highlights

Attendance was good. Prices were reasonable.

We had a theme, Walk thru History, that played across all areas, including walks, videos on the bus, a reenactor, workshops and socials. People bought into this.

We had over 140 volunteers with newly purchased vests that identified and gave the volunteers purpose, which they enjoyed.

We did our best to be fiscally prudent. We borrowed items as much as we could, including tables, easels, power cords, whiteboards, TV monitors and computers. We had no IT cost for our purposes. AVA had IT costs, which they worked out in a separate contract.

We had consistent signage at all walks, including pre and post, that were transported by our Equipment Chairs.

We pushed a green initiative to reuse items to be handed off to the next convention; vests, signs, and lanyards.

Fun ideas that were successful: theme T-shirt day, a group seasonal walk the night before the convention started that got people mingling, and a visible mascot in the form of a costumed mule.

For the most part people liked riding the buses.

No one got seriously hurt.

Our ice cream social fundraiser, in conjunction with the group seasonal walk, raised almost the full amount of the AVA donation to the not for profit agency.

Problems

Not enough convention programs were printed. Every person who registers should have a program. The silent auction room was far enough away from the action that a good number of people never visited it. Maybe they weren't interested?

Our linear walks, our two-location walks took too long and people were anxious about being late for lunch or workshops. Walks were first designed with bus riders in mind. An alternative start for the unknown number of people who would drive to the walks is what prompted the second start location. We would not recommend this for future conventions.

The physical space of the hotel caused logistical problems in that there was not a dedicated banquet area, which meant rearranging the room following the General Assembly, which caused the banquet to have a later than anticipated start time.

Merchandise, including convention shirts and hats, was separate from the registration area, which caused confusion. These need to be located together.

There was not a big enough space at the hotel for the cocktail hour. The president's reception was too crowded. Too many people were invited. Breakfast was not pleasing to many people, as there were few bread items. Not having a convention program for everyone was mentioned.

People seemed unaware of the daily digital newsletter. Post hard copies around the hotel.

Predicting the number of walkups, walkers who would be in cars, was not possible and therefore caused great anxiety regarding available parking space. It was for this reason that we created the linear walks.

Recommendations

Workshops should not start before 2:00 PM. It takes a long time to do a walk in an unfamiliar location and people come to the convention for the walks.

Signs are needed everywhere in the hotel concerning location and time of all workshops and events.

We suggest eliminating evening entertainment after the banquet, since most people leave after the meal. This has been observed behavior for the past three conventions.

Obtaining corporate business sponsorships by the host club is an unfair and unrealistic expectation. Your hosts running the convention will probably not have marketing or fund-raising skills. AVA needs to do this. The club should only be expected to get in-kind donations needed to run the walk; water, snacks, and materials needed to run the walk as well as silent auction items.

Statistics

\$30.00 Meet and Greet - Baseball themed dinner, 384 attended

\$35.00 New York State Desserts, with Fiddle Tunes, Folksongs, & Fancy Footwork, 357 attended

\$65.00 Banquet with Dutch Decorations, 370 attended

Convention Registrations - Total registrations 590

Registration Fees

\$400.00 – not an AVA member

\$340.00 – AVA Lifetime Member

\$360.00 - AVA Associate Member

\$ 75.00 - 3 day walks with transportation - 187

\$150.00 – 1 day with transportation (Wednesday or Thursday) – 15

\$175.00 – 1 day with transportation (Friday)

\$ 30.00 - per day with walk and transportation

\$ 3.00 – individual walk – 151

Delegate Credentialing Fee - \$75.00

Transportation - \$15.00 per day

Wednesday – 368 preregistered, 302 sent out, 306 returned, bus looped.

Thursday – 363 preregistered, 300 sent out, 304 returned

Friday – 365 preregistered, 306 sent out, 281 returned, bus looped.

Walk Event Numbers

Pre: Portsmouth – 418, Danvers – 409, Springfield – 429

Convention: Cohoes – 643, Saratoga National Park – 604, Albany – 602

Post: Cooperstown – 422, Buffalo – 261

Workshops, including a \$75.00 honorarium per speaker

History – all well attended. The topics went along with our theme, Walk Thru History.

Erie Canal – 134, Saratoga Battlefield – 125, City of Albany – 94, Underground Railroad in New

York State – 118 pre-registered, 198 attended, Welcome to Cooperstown/Casey at the Bat – 102

To counteract the honorarium fees requested by each of our presenters (they were all civil workers and this is part of their job, so they asked if we would make a donation to a museum, organization or library), we charged a \$5 fee for each course to cover it. This more than made up for the \$75 honorariums per speaker and gave AVA some extra money. No one complained about the extra charge. We understand that a profit of \$57,000.00 was made. We believe that ESCV was fiscally prudent and that the club, as well as many of its members were exceptionally generous. ESCV donated \$2,090.00. Members paid out-of-pocket for items that amounted to \$2,869.00 and our borrowing of needed items to run the convention, rather than renting from the hotel, saved the amount of \$1,310.00.