

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, April 29, 2025, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
MDST Las Cruces Convention Center

- 1. Call to Order – Chair, Nancy Wittenberg:** Chair, Nancy Wittenberg called the meeting to order at 1:14 p.m. MDST.
- 2. Approval of Agenda Roll Call – Secretary:**
 - All Officers & Henry were present except for Finance Chair, Ed McCabe.
 - All RDs were present except MA-RD Craig Gauger and SC-RD Teresa Arnold.
 - DRDs present were MA-DRD Roxy Weaver, NC-DRD Ken Johnson, NW-DRD Ed Hainline, SC-DRD Terri Tyler and SW-DRD Susan Noonan.
- 3. Approval of Agenda:** A motion to approve the modified agenda was made by the NE-RD Carol Giesecke. The motion was seconded by the Vice-Chair Carl Cordes. The modified agenda was approved.
- 4. Approval of the Minutes of March 25, 2025, Special Board Meeting:** RM-RD Steve Sandridge. The motion was seconded by NE-RD Carol Giesecke. The meeting minutes were approved.
- 5. Board Chair's Remarks – Nancy Wittenberg, Chair:**
 - Nancy has been on the Board for 12 years.
 - The Board has moved from an operational board to a strategic board.
 - The Board needs to continue to keep the organization healthy and thriving.
- 6. CEO/President's Report – Henry Rosales, CEO/President:**
 - Welcome to everyone
 - After almost 14 years, Karen is no longer with the AVA. Not to worry, we will resume processing book later in May. If you would like to send a note to Karen, send it to the office and we will make sure she receives it.
 - Tentative retreat dates for new BOD are June 17-19-2025 in San Antonio. The AVA will include 2 nights hotel stay and airfare for directors and officers. Don't believe we will be able to accommodate the deputy directors.
 - Texas Trail Roundup – The AVA met with the committee members of the TTR. The AVA will assume lead for the TTR. The committee members will still assist with the TTR responsibilities. Net profit was \$531, but that does not include any salaries. There will be some changes. Delores will continue to provide IML support. AT-RD Jeff Giddings moved to support the recommendation that the AVA continue sponsorship of the IML TTR for the

next year and hopefully many more. The motion was seconded by SC-DRD Terri Tyler and by SW-RD Andy Thomas. The motion passed.

- If you are at a convention hotel and there is a problem, please let Henry know.
- Updates for walk tomorrow. The Mayor of Juarez will meet us on the bridge tomorrow. With the Mayor, there will probably be publicity. Susan Fine is identifying people who will speak media. There could be additional dignitaries during the walks. They put together an event at 10:30 a.m. It will be indoors. They are preparing a lot of food. It will be on the return near the bridge, on the Mexico side. The buses will be leaving a little later so we will be at the event at the proper time.
- Special thanks to the Convention Committee for all the work they have put into the convention.

7. Discussion of Officer Elections – Nancy Wittenberg

- Chris Mellen has rescinded his nomination to be Finance Chair due to health issues.
- We don't allow nominations from the floor in our bylaws.
- We will need to open the nominations again and have a Zoom/Teams meeting and conduct vote at that meeting. The person should have the proper credentials to serve as Finance Chair.
- Motion to reopen nominations for Finance Chair and the current Finance Chair continues in that position until a replacement is elected was made by NE-RD Carol Giesecke. The motion was seconded by SC-DRD Terri Tyler. Discussion followed. Motion passed unanimously.

8. Report from each of the Regional Directors of examples of an individual club's implementation of two AVA Bylaws purposes – Nancy Wittenberg: We have only asked our clubs for financial reports.

- We should also be asking our clubs to provide what they have done to further the purpose of the AVA.
- The purpose of the clubs should be the same as the AVA, which is to provide public events that stress the fun and exhilaration of walking, providing means of public education and create interest of our programs.
- NE-RD Carol Giesecke: From 3 clubs, emphasize the size of the club, the Empire State gives workshops quarterly and would have a walk as part of their presentation. They ask each member to bring someone new in. Empire State has two walks every week. Also, use of Meet-up.
- NW-RD Sharon Moats: We have some clubs with no outreach but do have regular walks and they bring friends along. Other clubs have good outreach. They use Meet-Up groups and the state organization & publication. The publication will be closed as it is too costly. Training new trail masters. Plan multiday events.

- **PA-RD Becky Forsythe:** The experts are the Sacramento Walking Sticks. They do a really good job with notices and public service announcements, which are at no cost. There is nothing wrong with inviting friends to a walk. Some clubs walk every weekend. If each walker brings a friend, there are twice as many walkers walking. Had a meeting with the club in Hawaii. They have members, but not many who are using AVA awards. The club will pay for the guest walkers.
- **Secretary Leslie Stone:** Mid-Florida Milers posts their walks on Spectrum as a PSA. Happy Wanderers teamed up with the city's fitness program and provides 10 weeks of walks. Wednesday ACE-WG walks are free. Sunday walks are IVV and paid. The club pays for the first walk for the fitness walker. The Happy Wanderers also attend health fairs.
- **SW-RD Andy Thomas:** I prepared a report. The San Antonio clubs have been consolidating but they also have outreach. Pathfinders are not charging dues currently. They outreach at festivals and health fairs. The San Antonio clubs participate monthly at the National Office to outreach in the King William Neighborhood.
- **MA-DRD Roxie Weaver:** In Michigan, we use ACE walks and then push them toward regular AVA walks. We use social media to attract younger walkers.
- **Bob Buzolich – Nominations Committee Chair:** There is a YMCA in northeast Indiana, where the Three Rivers Strollers is located, and the YMCA has volunteered to sponsor a walking club. They have a relationship with four other Ys in the area. The local club should get with the YMCA for a partnership.
- **RM-RD Steve Standridge:** The region is large with only 6 clubs. We are holding our own. No gains, no losses. In larger clubs, many never participate. In central Colorado, the military relationship is important.
- **Chair Nancy Whittenberg:** There is a young man, military, named Bob in the Washington DC area, has created a non-profit to get the military to walk with the Maryland clubs to achieve military awards for the troops. This type of relationship could be expanded to other areas.

9. Comments from individual board members:

- **SE-RD Kathryn King:** Helena, GA is going to have an Oktoberfest. Florida has great activities and Walk Around Florida. East Tennessee Wanderers has a healthy treasury and good walks. Trying to help South Carolina Club.
- **SC-DRD Terri Tyler:** South Central clubs are struggling. We have to do long weekends to get good numbers. Many club officers just switch around as they can't find new people to fill the positions. We try to support each other when we can.
- **AT-RD Jeff Giddings:** Last week, attended the International Trails Summit in Madison, Wisconsin with Henry & Jerry Wilson. The purpose was to engage with trail organizations, platforms and users for future partnerships

opportunities. I prepared an after-action report. There were young people who came up to find out about the AVA. Possible connections with Maryland Parks for walking opportunities under-represented communities. Possible use of AI for marketing. Found the experience to be of value. Sorry to be leaving position as RD but I have a very capable RD, Karen Kaufman, who will be the new RD. Overall, the Atlantic Region is holding steady but expects one club to close or merge with another club soon due to the number of members. We put on a regional conference every two years, but participation is declining.

- **SW-RD Andy Thomas:** I think my term has been good. I feel like I haven't been fully participating as I still work and there were conflicts.
- **NE-RD Carol Giesecke:** My tenure has dovetailed Nancy's on the BOD. Thanks for sponsoring training and leadership. I try to send out messages to clubs and zoom meetings a couple of times a year. Have had several successful tri-club events. Shoutout to the region.
- **MA-DRD Roxie Weaver:** Took over the Deputy direction when Roberta passed away. Have not lost clubs for the last two years. We continue to do off-year regional conventions. Monthly zoom meeting will start back up soon.
- **RM-RD Steve Sandridge:** This is my last BOD meeting. Try to spread work around and not try to pile the work on the same people all the time. You can do a lot of things well, or a few things really well. Watch how you spend your energy.
- **NW-RD Sharon Moats:** The region has about 400 YREs and we have lots of weekend events. The RD & DRD must work together. Don't plan walks within 50 miles of a neighboring walk. Traffic between Portland & Seattle is terrible and that has brought down the participation of traditional events. We are planning 4 multi-day events during next year. Those are well attended. There will be a loss of participation due to Tater Tours retiring. They really supported the clubs. There are some clubs that will be closing. There are no new clubs. Every community has their own walking clubs that compete with the AVA clubs. Washington Mountaineers have 16,000 members and a \$9M budget, the Washington Trails Association has 110K members and a \$19M budget. These are professional organizations and recruit youth for volunteer opportunities. It is a changing world.
- **NC-RD Susan Pinneke:** Almost all clubs are developing partnerships within their communities. The most well-known partnership is the Black Hills association with Crazy Horse. We have a member that sits on the Iowa Trails Association. Clubs often have social activities associated with the walks. A Minnesota club has partnered with State Parks for over 25 years. There is a club that, in association with the "Step to the Beat" special program, works with a music association that provides instruments to disadvantaged people. Have a new club that developed from the Nebraska Trail Association. The Bismark YRE is sponsored by a Convention & Visitor's Bureau. The club in

Wahpeton, North Dakota is the Wahpeton Parks & Rec Department. Clubs hold more than walks. They include snowshoeing and canoeing. I have lost one club and may lose another club soon. As I wind up my term as RD, I have really enjoyed the time. As Volunteer Coordinator for this convention, I would like to thank all my volunteers.

- **PA-RD Becky Forsythe:** I came to the BOD to free up Carl to be Vice-Chair. Everything is different from when I was RD in the past. I haven't been able to form relationships and don't know where to go to ask for help. I cannot continue to be the PA-RD due to family obligations. I think those who helped me get through the term. Hope going forward that when someone joins the BOD after the BOD training, that training is also offered to the new person. This is difficult due to the Teams/electronic meetings. I really missed the in-person meetings. I was unable to find a replacement and the DRD is also resigning. Will continue to look for a replacement RD. The organization needs to be aware that there is very little turnover because there is no one coming up behind them. We need to recruit new members and leaders.
- **Secretary Leslie Stone:** It has been an interesting two years. I would like to thank the AVA for letting me go to Australia and New Zealand to represent the AVA at the IVV Congress in Canberra in March 2024. It was a lot of fun, and I met other leaders from around the world. I would like to thank my credentials and teller volunteers. Hopefully, one of those volunteers will want to be secretary when my term is over.
- **Vice-Chair Carl Cordes:** It has been fun and it has been real and it will continue for me. I would like to thank everyone here today for making the BOD work. It would be nice to have a benefactor for in-person BOD meeting where we could also have an audience. I also went to New Zealand and Australia to attend the IVV Congress and meet international members. I attended a couple of multi-event weekends. I attended the Mid-America weekend. I missed last years Northeast weekend but will be at this years Northeast Light House Weekend. Nancy, thank you very much for your service.
- **Chair Nancy Wittenberg:** Nancy requested comments from the audience.

10. Comments from the public in attendance:

- **Publicity Chair Susan Fine:** I am in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. There are 4 clubs that all work together. We talk to people and tell them to go to the AVA website. I realize that we do 3-4 walks a week but that information is not on the AVA website. We don't have the resources for our own website. Is there a way to get our information out? Just something to think about.
- **Guest from the Northeast:** Our club made out cards with our club information so we can hand them out.
- **Guest:** Suggested that if there is a Facebook page, then a card with the Facebook site could be handed out.

- **Nominations Chair Bob Buzolich:** There is a report from the Nominations Committee. It touches on some of the issues that Steve and Becky mentioned.

11. Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by AT-RD Jeff Giddings. The motion was seconded by all attending. The meeting was adjourned at 3:07 P.M. MDST.

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie Stone
Secretary,
AVA: America's Walking Club