



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

11 April 2021

Virtual at [Meeting Link](#)

Tel: +16892060314,454673185#

1007 – 1340 hrs.

### I. Call to Order.

Called to order at 1007 hrs. by Chair Dan Brizuela.

### II. Participants.

Voting members in **bold**. If some other Group is primary name in (parentheses)

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG)	<b>Keith Conover</b>
Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group (BRMRG)	
Maryland Search and Rescue (MSAR)	<b>Dan Brizuela</b> <b>Kyle Rhoderick</b> Michael Hansen Jocelyn King
Mountaineer Area Rescue Group (MARG)	<b>Carl Werntz</b> <b>Ken Chiacchia</b> Don Scelza
Northwest Pennsylvania Canine Search and Rescue (NWPAC9SAR)	<b>LuAnn Gatti</b>
Remote Support Corps (RSC)	
Search and Rescue – Ohio (SAROH)	<b>Brian Maier</b> Stephen McClanahan Alexa Ashi (representing the Credentialing Board)

Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group (SMRG)	<b><i>Katy Hart</i></b> <b><i>Sean McElligot</i></b>
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### **III. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the January 17, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved (Keith Conover moved for approval, Ken Chiacchia seconded, none opposed/none abstained, thus all approved).

### **IV. Officer Reports**

#### **a. Chair/Vice-Chair (Dan Brizuela/LuAnn Gatti)**

From the Chair:

In the interests of using the Board’s time efficiently, the Chair suggests the following: Expectation is that when something comes to the Board that requires lots of discussion, the Board should decide if it wants to engage the topic in detail in the present moment. If not, a brief discussion to gain a sense of the Board’s thoughts should be followed by assigning someone to investigate it further, develop a specific proposal and then bring it back to the Board at a later date. In this way, the Board can act in a more focused and efficient manner.

The Chair, with Michael Hansen, will be working on the strategic goals and plans to develop a draft. Considering the above discussion, it was encouraged to use the bimonthly, unstructured Open Working Group meetings to help with the development of a strategic plan (Open Working Group discussions are valuable as they keep the conversation moving forward, help to uncover/discover new issues, generate of good ideas and keep motivation high). Thus, a process of informal discussions to generate the ideas followed by a small group forming a specific proposal to be presented to the Board seems to be a model.

Nothing additional to report from the Vice-Chair.

#### **b. Secretary (Stephen McClanahan)**

Email communications will be, whenever possible, to individual’s asrc.net email account. Nothing further to report.

#### **c. Treasurer (Victoria Avery)**

No report received.

#### **d. Credentialing Board Chair (Alexa Ashi)**

Three updates from the Credentialing Board. To facilitate the assessing of members, group training officers were recently asked to share any training sessions they have scheduled that might also present opportunities for testing (with minimal disruption to the original training event) and to share this information with Credentialing Board. Second, work is in the early stages of drafting a position task book for ASRC Examiners. Part of this work will be the development of training materials/class for Examiners. Third, the Credentialing Board has been tracking discussions related to the development of training standards for Search Managers and will be working collaboratively with Don Scelza as these efforts proceed.

There was some brief discussion regarding the number of members who are testing at the various Field levels. Per LuAnn Gatti, the Credentialing Board is regularly sending out the Field IV examination and

has also had a few members test for Field III or II. There are still some teams that have not yet had a member go through the credentialing process. Questions arose as to the best ways of promoting the credentialing process to member teams via SharePoint, the Board of Directors, etc. Additional discussion regarding the benchmark rates at which ASRC hopes/expects/needs individual members to achieve the various field ranks. It was recognized that 2020 may be a skewed baseline year (due to the pandemic) and not representative to establish benchmarks but nonetheless will provide valuable data.

**e. Conference Training Officer (Ken Chiacchia)**

The Training Committee has had a few discussions regarding directions with respect to next version of training standards. There are two camps of thought; one view is to just focus what jobs need to be performed at any level (this is a higher-level view) and the other perspective is that training standards need to have details (in part, to be able to share with AHJs to demonstrate capabilities). To resolve, the viewpoints will need to meet in the middle. Ken is drafting a document that takes the previous work of Carl Werntz and John Rogoski regarding documenting the jobs that each field level is expected to be able to perform and to make that content the first chapter of new training standards, followed by current standards as subsequent chapters. In addition, it would be ideal to have links in the detailed standards sections that connect back to the larger jobs view so that each element in a standard is shown to be relevant to that part of our mission. Once the Training Committee has drafts of proposed changes, the Credentialing Board will be engaged for their input.

**f. Conference Operations Officer (Stevo Solaya)**

No report received.

**g. Information Technology Officer (Michael Hansen)**

The SharePoint platform being used. The landing page of SharePoint will be regularly updated to keep it fresh. Members need to be reminded of [home.asrc.net](http://home.asrc.net) site. There was discussion regarding the addition of links on the home page to include a members-only intranet site link, a link to archived Board minutes and finally, a link for ASRC publications, both those free to users as well as those only available commercially. Keith Conover volunteered to structure this link.

**h. Group Updates**

This is still a new item to the Board agenda and remains voluntary for each group to share significant events within their team.

A question was posed within the Team's chat: Would it make sense for each officer to provide a report prior to the Board meeting? This practice is found within some EMS services and officer reports are provided a week prior. That way, time spent is not on what is happening but on discussing the why's.

MSAR (Dan Brizuela): Team seems to be a victim of its own success; last month, MSAR had 17 new members join, making the team 80+ members in total on the roster. This places significant challenges on team leadership in terms of how the team is managed, operated, and trained. Jocelyn King was able to get all call-out members vaccinated; this was enabled by a strong working relationship with the Anne Arundel County EMS agency. In addition, MSAR has an infection control officer, Jim McPherson (a requirement as an EMS agency in Maryland) which helps emphasize safety.

AMRG (Keith Conover): Team has been busy the past quarter. A recent search is noteworthy and affecting the group. A 74 YOM was found at the bottom of an approximately 100 ft embankment with serious head injuries, decorticate posturing and agonal breaths. The team extracted him to emergency services, but he unfortunately died later at the hospital. This mission caused some degree of psychological stress for team members. AMRG has also been working with DCNR (Department of Conservation and Natural

Resources, which includes State Parks and Forest Service) for some members to provide medical support for wildfire missions. To train for this, team members will need to qualify on DCNR's moderate pack test. The team continues to train regularly and is returning to in-person training (with masks); they recently participated in a clean-up of Mount Washington in Pittsburg. The mayor of Pittsburg visited the operation and brought lunch for those involved. Several team members are vaccinated; access to the vaccine was via Allegany EMS, which in turn is likely a consequence of the good working relationship AMRG has fostered over several years.

MARG (Carl Werntz): MARG had a recent search involving a 90ish YOF who found herself out overnight. She was found the next morning by a team of emergent volunteers working under MARG's mission. The team successfully performed an extrication and the woman recovered, being discharged from the hospital within a few days. The team is now conducting small group trainings in-person, while continuing monthly on-line training. The goal is to have full field training by May. Several members are fully vaccinated against Covid-19, but some newer members are expressing vaccine hesitancy, which puts them and the team at some risk.

NWPAK9 (LuAnn Gatti): The team has added one new member since last meeting. The team now has more GSAR members than dog handlers and is actively working to recruit more K9 handlers. Just over half of the team is vaccinated. Business meetings remain virtual, but field trainings have been ongoing for some time. The team has had two call outs recently. One was a mutual aid call out that was quickly resolved; the other involved an 11 YOF missing on her bicycle, temperature 29F and getting dark. This search ended well; the young girl had biked seven miles to her grandmother's house when a neighbor reported her well.

SAROH (Brian Maier): The team doing well; Covid has not dampened recruiting efforts. The team has added 5-6 new members in the past 6 months who have become active. Thursday trainings are held virtually every month and the team has been holding in-person field trainings for the past several months (except a couple when Covid case numbers were too high). Attendance at field trainings is running around 80% of members; virtual attendance is high. The team is purchasing some new GPS units via a Walmart grant.

SMRG (Sean McElligot): The team continues as usual. New members have been coming through and the team is holding small trainings to help orient them to things like litter carry. Training has been a hybrid of classroom and field work. Not keeping track of vaccinations but the response has been positive. And the team has had a few searches. All in all, things are positive.

BRMRG No report.

Remote Support Corps: No report.

#### **i. Publications (Keith Conover)**

Considerable effort has been spent on getting Adobe In-Design Share-for-Review to work and it currently seems to be functioning. This will be the primary tool used for editing/commenting/revising ASRC documents, including those originating from the Publications Committee. The plan is to test Share-for-Review by posting several of the one-pagers from the Publications Committee via links in Teams and using Adobe to edit/comment.

More broadly, it was felt the best way to invite comments on publications coming out of the committee is to present them as final working drafts to the Open Working Group following their development.

## **V. Unfinished Business**

### **a. Potential new member groups (LuAnn Gatti)**

There is nothing to report on Dinwiddie. Also, nothing to report on Elkland SAR (generally, they are highly thought of within ASRC). There is an upcoming PSARC meeting; LuAnn and Ken will likely take the opportunity to bring ASRC to the attention of other teams.

There was some discussion as to whether the ASRC should be proactively trying to recruit new teams to the conference. It was quickly pointed out that for the Conference to remain viable, new teams are needed. Per Michael Hansen, the culture within ASRC is right for actively recruiting new teams and the Conference must grow, perhaps one new team annually.

There was some discussion on what might constitute the geographic region(s) from which new member teams should be recruited. It was noted that LuAnn had talks with a Canadian team some time back and thus the question becomes, would the ASRC entertain such a team joining the Conference and what would be the implications of having an international Conference. Nationally, there was a general sense that teams located within a reasonable distance (the MARG/SAROH distance was considered reasonable, which is about 5 hrs. driving time) should be considered as potential new member groups. One of the more critical elements of any potential new member group is how they might fit within the culture of the ASRC. Teams that have expressed interest but have not followed through are generally newer teams who are still working to establish themselves; perhaps we should offer to have existing ASRC teams connect with them and help them to get their feet on the ground as a means growing the Conference.

It was agreed to keep this item (potential new member groups) as a standing Board item.

#### **b. ASRC Position Task Books: Public Accessibility discussion**

The Chair has had discussions with Steve Weiss, Credentialing Board, regarding this topic. It is the position of the Credentialing Board that any decision regarding public accessibility of PTB should come from the Board of Directors. Further, in the event PTBs are made public, the ASRC should include a legal disclaimer to protect the ASRC from any sort of inappropriate or unauthorized use of the PTB by someone outside the Conference. Representing the Credentialing Board, Alexa Ashi shared the following comments: in addition to the above, publicly accessible PTBs should have any group-specific requirements removed and the instructions for use rewritten to be more appropriate for an external audience. The Credentialing Board does not have a strong point of view on the question of public accessibility.

A lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of publishing PTBs ensued. Basically, the rationale to keep PTBs within the ASRC is that their content is the intellectual property of the ASRC, is of great value to the Conference and should be used to attract new members/member groups to the ASRC. The need that is not met with this position arises in situations where it is of value to be able to share PTBs with AHJs or other governmental entities to demonstrate the full capabilities of ASRC teams/credentialed members (e.g., ASRC standards similar to/equivalent to NASAR's) and hence build relationships to grow the Conference. A compromise solution was found in a few motions put forward by Carl Werntz (CW) and Sean McElligot (SMc) as follows:

CW: informally proposed to allow teams to share, but not retain, PTBs with AHJs and outside agencies interested in the Conference. In addition, while not published publicly, a non-readable page (or so) of the PTBs would be published to demonstrate their existence.

SMc: Seconded with a caveat: Board to agree with the non-readable version before publishing.

Michael Hansen: since the motion is to endorse the status quo, there is no need for a motion to do that. His point of view is to not share in a way that they can be copied but we should feel free to use in a way to enhance relationships with AHJs. Others (the Chair) wants a definitive decision on this topic.

SMc put forward an amended motion “to maintain current process of how training standards and PTBs are presented and to put forth a publicly facing statement/picture that demonstrates the ASRC has a thought-out training process. CW seconded to allow discussion which followed and led to yet another amended motion from SM: “continue current process of only releasing PTBs to interested groups (those interested in joining the ASRC and/or government agencies interested in training standards) and AHJs, not releasing PTBs to the public and then looking for an option of an example to present to the public to demonstrate that the ASRC has a standard that is well thought out and documented”. Keith Conover seconded.

The Chair proposed the Board only consider SMC’s last amended motion and not consider prior ones. Keith seconded this amendment, and the last amended motion was voted on.

Voting: Brian Maier opposed. No abstentions. All others were considered as voting in the affirmative and the motion passed.

### **c. Organizational direction on credentialing non-ASRC members**

The question of whether the ASRC would be interested in exploring the option of providing credentialing to non-ASRC members has arisen. The Chair was contacted by David Powers who was looking for some recognized credentialing process for PSARC members as they move away from NASAR. Clearly, the preferred method is for PSARC teams to join ASRC. Another option is for groups like PSARC to take the ASRC’s training standards and build their own credentialing process. But if these are not something PSARC teams wish to pursue, the Chair wanted to explore if the Board sees potential value in offering ASRC credentialing to non-ASRC teams/individuals at some point in the future and if so, should a working group be created to explore this further. It is recognized the ASRC’s current credentialing process was not designed with this in mind.

Discussion followed, the salient points of which are the following:

- this is currently not possible given PTBs are not to be shared outside ASRC.
- entire credentialing process is built around concept of a GTO, so there is no possibility outside of this.
- this would change the nature of the ASRC from a conference of teams that work together with common training standards to a training/credentialing organization who has some member teams.
- credentialing process is not tenable for individuals, but for groups of individuals.
- if teams want ASRC’s credentials, why are they not joining the Conference?
- offering external credentialing would remove incentives to join the ASRC.
- NASAR has a national presence, ASRC does not. This will present a challenge.
- ASRC does not have the broad recognition it needs to serve as a credentialing body.
- in favor of a working group to try to flush out some of the changes needed and consequent implications of such a move, so that, if the time ever came that the ASRC wanted to move in this direction, it would have much of the prework done.
- in favor of establishing a working group to explore the question at a team level (not credentialing individuals) in tandem with working on how to bring teams into the Conference.
- this is part of strategic planning, do the strategic plan first.
- start a working group now to help develop the growth component of the strategic plan.
- no doubt that a strategic plan will have a growth component, so no need to wait to get going on this. We have some teams interested, so need to aggressively move on this.
- strategic plan should state where the ASRC will be in 5 years and where it will be going in 10 years. Strategic plan will have growth component, but risk is that working on components without at least a draft overall plan may make a process that is disjointed.

LuAnn Gatti, as membership coordinator, will lead this working group focused on bringing in new member groups.

Next step: some draft version of the strategic plan to be presented at the Winter Retreat.

#### **d Training donation and FIND software discussion.**

This continues the discussion from the previous Board meeting. Don Scelza provided the following update.

There is considerable thinking ongoing about how we train and operationalize search management within ASRC. A relational map (attached to the BOD Minutes) of the various components on improving search management (SM) has been developed. FIND is a piece of this, a tool we use. In the past, ASRC was known for its ability to run searches but this may be waning. Remote Support Corps (RSC) has been a big step in the direction of improving SM ability, but the RSC got separated from the Search manager cadre. Part of growing SM capabilities is to utilize the best technology tools available, which includes RSC and possibly FIND. During an operation, SM and the RSC should be able to function together seamlessly since RSC is part of the SM function. ASRC search manager cadre is about best practices in SM and the RSC is about best technology.

Besides organizational and operational components, the remaining major element is training. There has been progress here: a skills matrix has been completed, documents describing what SM4, SM3, etc. have been drafted. Enough work has been done here to be able to build the opening chapter of a search manager manual quickly.

William Dixon's initial offer was to fund FIND for the Conference. His new offer is to fund search management, and that includes FIND.

The proposal of financial support and discussions with William have driven the work of improving ASRC search management. A FIND demo has been scheduled to do a specific review from ASRC's perspective. SAR Topo is also being considered in terms what changes might be made that would improve SM capabilities with this tool and perhaps any financial support might be directed there. The offer of financial support has driven the conversations/thought as to how to best build the SM function within ASRC.

Nothing is needed from the Board at this time. The immediate work is to bring the RSC and the SM Cadre together.

In terms of the administration of any potential financial donation, no specific discussions regarding the structure of the donation have been conducted but the expectation is that William Dixon will provide a contribution to the ASRC with a set of requirements for directions of those funds, which hopefully will be relatively broad. This would imply the ASRC has the ability to track any spending at the specified level. Lastly, if the Board decides to invest in tools like FIND, there will need to be plans for their continuance once any funding expires.

A brief discussion followed on how SAR Topo and FIND compare. SAR Topo starts with mapping while FIND begins with search management. Each have their advantages but not enough is yet known to determine if these technologies are in competition or offer compatible/synergistic opportunities. In addition, ASRC must be concerned with the level of technical support that may/may not be available for any of these tools on a long-term basis.

It is suggested to use a significant portion of time at the AGM to raise awareness of search management and the ongoing improvement work.

## **VI. New Business**

### **a. ASRC guidance on firearm carry by members.**

During the discussion on new member groups held at the January 17, 2021 Board of Directors meeting, the question of ASRC's position on firearms carry by members arose. In subsequent meetings of the Open Working Group, Carl Werntz volunteered to develop a white paper (attached to the BOD minutes) that provides background on this topic.

A firearms policy was in the ASRC's Operational manual but was unintentionally dropped in development of the Operational Guidance around 2014. Review of existing policies from ASRC teams show about an even split between forbidding the carry of firearms and keeping the firearm concealed.

Recommendations from the white paper are:

Conference member teams consider creating a policy on firearms carry. The current firearms policies of several conference teams are included in an appendix to the White Paper. If a Group chooses to allow firearms, recommended points to address in Group policies:

- At all times individual members will be responsible for knowing and abiding by federal state, and local firearms laws (where the mission/training is located).
- If firearms are allowed, they are NEVER required, and that any decision to carry or use a firearm is at the personal responsibility of the member.
- That the carrying of firearms on individual missions/trainings must comport with any preferences expressed by the AHJ. (If an AHJ requests no firearms, all Group personnel will honor that request).
- Open carry is discouraged/forbidden, except for sworn LE personnel.
- The firearms are for personal protection only, and any display, poor concealment, or brandishing of firearms is contrary to policy and could result in disciplinary action.
- The policy must make it clear that SAR professionals are not LE personnel, and that we do not have LE powers.

Discussion within the Board yielded the following:

The specific policy on the carrying of firearms is up to each member Group. The ASRC's role is to provide guidance on those policies. At a minimum, there was general agreement on the Board that each ASRC member Group should have a firearms policy for their members and guest searchers from other ASRC teams to follow. Group policies should be published and shared with other ASRC teams for awareness. ASRC should not be requiring firearms carry. ASRC discourages the open carry of firearms, noting that people, including those lost and in need of rescue, tend to behave differently around individuals who have a firearm. Further, openly carrying a firearm to a search or other ASRC activity can have a negative impact to ASRC's professional reputation and subsequent impact on the team's relationships with AHJs. (In this regard, it was noted that the ASRC uniform was intentionally chosen to not represent that of law enforcement.)

Next steps: Carl Werntz will bring a specific guidance to the Board at its next meeting for action.

LuAnn Gatti requested and was granted permission to share the white paper with Dinwiddie SAR, with deletion of reference to the second amendment (page 4 of the white paper).

### **b. Quarterly seminar series/external outreach**

An idea that was developed within the Open Working group is to offer a quarterly seminar series as a means of external outreach and growing the ASRC. Presentations from recent Winter Retreats represent

opportunities to share externally some of the work that is taking place within the Conference. Lee Fuell and Stephen McClanahan have agreed to present work from the 2021 Winter Retreat in 20-30-minute webinar fashion; the initial goal is to determine what level of interest might exist going forward. Coincident with the webinar would be a mechanism for individuals to make donations to the ASRC. Microsoft Teams platform will be used to host these.

### **c. Annual General Meeting plans**

The intent is to hold the AGM in the summer; however, with Covid-19, it is safer this year for the AGM to be held as late in the year as possible, thus in October. While there need to be criteria regarding infection rates, etc. to determine if it safe to hold a large in-person event, it is more likely that those criteria will be met in October as compared to July. In addition to determining schedule, planning the event itself needs to be completed. Expressed goals from the Board are to engage as many ASRC members as possible (not just those who are representatives to the Board), recognizing that working together on SAR related problems adds tremendous value to the Conference. Events that are recognized as fun may help draw more participation. Discussions within the Open Working Group resulted in having the Training Committee taking responsibility for planning the SAR events at the AGM with Ken Chiacchia as lead (Stephen McClanahan volunteered to help). Ideas include conducting a sweep width experiment. The location will be at New Germany State Park in Maryland, which will require a special use permit. It was agreed that, for this year, the AGM will be held the weekend of October 8-10.

### **d. Scheduling of upcoming BoD meetings**

At the last Board meeting, we had set the second weekend of the first month of each quarter (except of the January meeting which would continue to fall on Martin Luther King weekend). The goal was to have a meeting schedule that was regular and predictable. Some BOD members have offered suggestions for other times more convenient. For example, holding virtual meetings on a Sunday interferes with some Team's SAR training (for in-person BOD meetings, weekends make sense for travel). After discussion, it was agreed that in-person meetings remain on Sundays, but virtual meetings move to Saturdays. Thus, in general, the meeting schedule is:

- January: Martin Luther King weekend, in person and tied with the ASRC Winter Retreat
- April: Saturday of the second weekend, virtual
- July: Sunday of the second weekend, in person and tied to the Annual General Meeting
- October: Saturday of the second weekend, virtual

For the remainder of 2021, considering the above discussion regarding the AGM, the schedule is:

- Saturday, July 10, 2021, virtual
- Sunday, October 10, 2021, AGM weekend

## **VII. Good of the Order**

Keith Conover has a new draft of the Branding Guide that will be ready for review/approval by the Board and thus on the agenda for the next BOD meeting. Adobe In-Design Share-for-Review has been debugged and will be shared broadly within the ASRC to interested members via email to [openworkinggroup@asrc.net](mailto:openworkinggroup@asrc.net).

Michael Hansen agreed to build a page on the SharePoint site that lists the Conference officers, BOD members and Group representatives.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 1340 hrs.