BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

16 Jan 2022

Virtual at Meeting Link

Tel: +16892060314,454673185#

I. Call to Order.

Called to order at 1510 hrs. by Dan Brizuela.

II. Participants.

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

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG)	
Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group (BRMRG)	***Greg Stronko***
Maryland Search and Rescue (MSAR)	***Dan Brizuela*** ***Jocelyn King*** *for Kyle Rhoderick* *Michael Hansen*
Mountaineer Area Rescue Group (MARG)	***Carl Werntz*** ***Ken Chiacchia*** *Don Scelza*
Northwest Pennsylvania Canine Search and Rescue (NWPAK9SAR)	***LuAnn Gatti*** ***Kathy Lamb***
Remote Support Corps (RSC)	*Talon Bevan*
Search and Rescue – Ohio (SAROH)	***Brian Maier*** *Stephen McClanahan*

Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group (SMRG)	*Sean McElligot*

III.   Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the Minutes of the October 10, 2021, meeting was made by Brian Maier and seconded by Sean McElligot. The Minutes were approved with Greg Stronko abstaining. (Greg is not receiving emails sent to the Open Working Group, which is where the Minutes, Board Agenda, etc. are sent. Victoria Avery is also not receiving emails. Mike Hansen will provide a brief description of how to properly manage settings in Outlook so emails to the OPW are forwarded to personal email accounts.)

IV.   Officer Reports

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

From the Chair: The Winter Retreat and efforts to re-incorporate the Conference will be discussed later in the agenda. Nothing else from the Chair; nothing to report from the Vice-Chair.

b. Secretary (Stephen McClanahan)

In addition to reporting Group rosters (discussed later in the agenda), Groups are reminded that ASRC patches and rocker bars (Field I, II, III, Remote Support Corps, Search Manager) are available from the Secretary. Please send requests for these and they will be mailed to you.

c. Treasurer (Victoria Avery via email)

No checks have been written and no deposits received since the last Board meeting. A description of the Treasurer's job will be developed; this will include timelines for various tasks. This will be submitted to the Board for review. Please send expense details (estimated at approximately $1100 with donations of ca. $400 received) of the Winter Retreat at Bear's Den (along with their address) so they can be paid. Lastly, once updated rosters are in hand, invoices will be created and sent to the Board representatives.

d. Credentialing Board Chair (Jocelyn King)

Progress continues per last Board meeting's report. No further details.

e. Conference Training Officer (Ken Chiacchia)

Updating the Field II standards was hitting an impasse regarding the medical training standards. However, this was resolved by rewording the requirements such that a formal certification was not required but rather a member can satisfy the requirements by attending classes. Obviously, a formal certification is fine and will be accepted. Group GTOs (or others who are qualified) can teach members of their groups. The ultimate goal is to have the Conference develop an online class to deliver this training. To that end, Don Scelza has been very generous in providing the curriculum from the CDS Outdoor School Wilderness First Aid class. The Medical Committee needs to review and ensure this curriculum is in line with Wilderness Medical Society guidelines. But once that is accomplished, the Training Committee should be able to complete the rewrite of the Field II standards and begin Field I. Lastly, to note that Don Scelza is working on the Search Manager standards.

f. Conference Operations Officer

The COO position is currently vacant.

g. Information Technology Officer (Michael Hansen)

A letter to Microsoft is being written to communicate that ASRC is working on re-establishing the non-profit status of the organization (see below agenda item on this topic).

h. Group Updates

MSAR (Dan Brizuela, Jocelyn King, Michael Hansen): The challenge is to onboard many new members. The team is not taking new member applications at this time, yet there are approximately 60 individuals who have expressed interest in joining once the team does admit new members. Last year, MSAR had 17 searches, a record for the past 10 years. Importantly, there has been very good turnout of MSAR members at each of these searches.

AMRG (Don Scelza): The team is busy onboarding a large number of new members and is in the process of conducting a FunSAR (Fundamental of Search and Rescue) course and a MLPI (Managing Lost Persons Incidents).

MARG (Ken Chiacchia): The team has had a number of recent searches recently.   The team is receiving a large number of new members, who seem to the background and level of interest that is particularly suitable to SAR.

NWPAK9 (LuAnn Gatti): The team is the charity of choice of the Stars and Strips Invitational Gymnastics event being held this weekend; this is the largest gymnastics event in Pennsylvania, with over 2000 attendees and 50 teams participating and will generate lots of funding for the team. It has been relatively quiet with respect to searches.

SAROH (Brian Maier): There are currently 17 members on the team. SAROH had a small search in December. Eric Sanderson is now the team's CEO and Brian Maier is COO. New members joining and are active.

SMRG (Sean McElligot): Nothing to report.

BRMRG (Greg Stronko): Training will restart at the end of January/early February. The team has roughly 30-40 members. The team is still affiliated with the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, where over 50% of the members must be students at the University and the Board and Treasurer have to be students.

REMOTE SUPPORT CORPS (Talon Bevan): The RSC is hosting a virtual SAREX focused on search management on Feb 18-19 (Friday evening and Saturday). It will be revamped from the exercise from last year. The announcement went out a few days ago. One of the goals is to increase the visibility of the RSC through the Conference; in addition, any ASRC members who are interested in joining the Remote Support Corps would be welcomed.

SEARCH MANAGER CADRE (Don Scelza): The Search Manager Cadre is working with the RSC to develop the upcoming SAREX; the exercise is a great opportunity for anyone interested in achieving the SM4 level. The exercise will consist of an overview of search theory, particularly those elements that are important when planning a search, a good deal of practical, hands-on experience with SARTopo, and then incorporate these elements into a simulated search (based on one of MARG's actual missions) across a few operational periods. The structure will be didactic, psychomotor, and application and then go up a level in complexity and repeat the learning process. Please advertise this event to your team members. There is a registration form; an announcement was sent to the Open Working Group mail on January 6th. Further, Mike Hansen will post the event to ASRC.net/register.

V.   Unfinished Business

a. Process for reporting Group rosters (Stephen McClanahan)

An excel workbook, with a tab for each member Group, was shared with the meeting agenda. The workbook is to be used to submit rosters. The information requested is needed to allow the work the Secretary and Treasurer are required to perform per ASRC policies. Each Group is requested to submit rosters in January of each year. Please use the new ASRC level designations (Field I, II, etc.) rather than FTL or FTM. Further, by limiting the information to only what is needed, other data fields that may be in your Team roster, such as personal information on individual members, is not shared needlessly. Please send your rosters to the Secretary. MARG and MSAR have already submitted their rosters for 2022.

VI.   New Business

a. Remembrance Gust Argerus

Gust Argerus passed away recently; Gust was a well-respected, involved member of the NWPAK9SAR team. He was very proud to be part of search and rescue; he was buried in his ASRC dress blue shirt. His search dogs, Pandora and Chance, are now with two other members of the team and they will continue to train and be involved.

b. Non-Profit Status of ASRC (Dan Brizuela)

Around the beginning of December last year, the ASRC was notified by Microsoft that the Conference no longer qualified as a non-profit organization and that it's free license for the suite of MS products would be revoked unless this situation was rectified. ASRC was given 90 days to do so. Upon investigation, it was found that the ASRC had not submitted Form 990 to the IRS for the past 3 years and because of this, the 501(3)c status was suspended by the IRS. In addition, this investigation revealed the Conference had not filed its Annual Report with the Virginia Secretary of State's office or paid the required annual dues to remain a corporation in good standing in VA where the ASRC is incorporated. Thus, technically, the ASRC's incorporation status had been suspended for nearly the past 5 years. and technically is not a non-profit organization at this moment in time.

The corporation status with VA has been successfully resolved and was relatively easy to do (it took only a few hours of work once the correct process was determined). It was fortunate the situation came to light when it did and was resolved just in time (the situation was rectified within weeks of 5-year deadline); otherwise, ASRC would have lost its corporation standing. Obviously, there need to be systems put in place to make sure the Conference is diligent in submitting its Annual Report and paying its dues to VA. While sounding onerous, the Annual Report is only list of officers of the ASRC.

The situation with the IRS and the 501(3)c status is not so straightforward. In mid-December, the application for reinstatement was submitted. This is the same form/process as for an initial application with the only exception being to indicate it is not a new application. One of options provided in the reinstatement application is to be reinstated in arrears, so, once approved, ASRC's non-profit status will again become continuous with no gaps being present.

The application is working its way through the IRS. It has been accepted but is difficult to track within the IRS; consequently, it is hard to know what the timeline may be. The IRS is not forthcoming with this information.

The challenge is the overall timeline; will the IRS approve the reinstatement as a non-profit organization in time to resolve the issue with Microsoft, so that the software license to the MS suite of products is not revoked. The 90-day period began around the middle of December and thus is about halfway through now.

Considerable discussion followed as to how to avoid this in the future. In fact, part of the reinstatement process involved committing to put systems in place to ensure these things do not happen in the future.

Several suggestions and ideas were discussed, which are summarized below:

From a policy perspective, this does not need to be a new policy but added to job descriptions and holding individuals in those positions accountable to the Conference.

The Conference Treasurer holds the primary responsibility, with the Chair being ultimately accountable.

There should be verification steps in place as well. The Vice-Chair position may be ideal for holding the responsibility to ensure critical action items are tended to in a timely manner.

Part of problem is the physical mailing address of the Conference, which is currently a shared (with BRMRG) PO Box on the campus of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. Apparently, no one from the Conference is receiving physical mail and that it was possible, perhaps even likely, the IRS and the VA Department of State sent notices regarding the lapse of filings. BRMRG's records officer and treasurer are not responsible for ASRC's mail (these are students at the University). (To note: because ASRC is expecting to receive mail from VA and the IRS, Greg Stronko agreed to check the PO Box in the short term.)

Is it necessary to consider the proximity of the Treasurer, bank and mailing address? While it is easier if all three are close, it is impossible to align and/or keep these aligned since members of the Conference are geographically distant from one another. Regardless of how close a bank and mailing address are, with any change in Treasurer, they will likely be distant from one another. Further, there is no reason for the Treasurer to need to be physically near a bank with current technology.

It is unknown how much physical mail the ASRC receives.

Is it possible to set up a virtual mail address, where a contracted service monitors and/or manages received mail on behalf of ASRC? These services mind your mailbox and send mail to you for a price (approximately $15 per month).

The Post office can scan mail and send notifications of mail to the treasurer@asrc.net address. The ASRC would need to set up a separate mail address from BRMRG, since BRMRG receives confidential mail (e.g., background checks of prospective members).

A separate PO Box (in the range of $200 per year) with monitoring is cheap insurance to preserve the organization.

Temporarily, set up a forwarding address for physical mail and use the Post Office scan functionality to watch for in-coming mail that is time sensitive.

Is there an email option available? Apparently yes, at least for reminder notices. (SAROH forgot to file with IRS and State one year but received an email notice to that effect.) It is not known what email address (if any) previous notices from the IRS and/or VA were sent to but for both the VA and IRS applications for reinstatement, the chair@asrc.net address was used to receive any reminders.

While lack of receiving physical mail may have contributed to this situation, it is not the primary cause.

Put regular calendar items to remind officers of action items. At a minimum, this should be on the Treasurer's calendar along with other officers (Vice-Chair, Secretary) to provide necessary checks.

Put a standing item on each Board meeting agenda to prompt conversation regarding important documents.

Create an 'actions by quarter' document. It should be a living document. While roles and responsibilities are specified in the Admin Manual, these are not as prescriptive as needed here.

Create job descriptions for each of the officer positions. Include primary responsibilities for actions as well as steps to check/verify actions by others.

Agreed next steps:

Each officer will draft a roles/responsibilities document for his/her position.

Dan Brizuela and Greg Stronko will continue the shared PO Box discussion. Greg will ensure the PO Box is monitored in the short term.

Robert Koester is the registered agent of ASRC in VA. Dan Brizuela will connect with Robert regarding this matter.

c. Approval of Remote Support Corps Officers

In December 2021, the RSC has elected Talon Bevan as Executive Officer, Ben McCandless as Operations Officer and Patty Lindsay as Deputy Operations Officer. This slate of officers has been submitted to the ASRC Board for final approval. Brian Maier made the motion to approve the officers in their positions and Ken Chiacchia seconded the motion. There was no significant discussion, and the officers were unanimously approved with no abstentions.

d. 50th Anniversary of ASRC Initial Planning (Mike Hansen)

The planning discussion started at AGM. There are about 2.5 years before the 50th anniversary and it will take that long to plan an appropriate celebration.

Initial thoughts are to have lots of invited speakers and guests as well as experts in various fields (who might be attracted to a large event) to continue to advance the Conference. The celebration may have some similarities to previous ASRC anniversary events but may also have an outdoor component. The location needs to be determined. A planning committee consisting of members from each Group needs to be assembled. Prior to that, a small cohort of members will meet to begin to work through big picture items and set some parameters for the planning committee. This cohort will consist of Mike Hansen, Dan Brizuela, LuAnn Gatti, Jocelyn King and Keith Conover.

A crude timeline gives a year to determine the who/what/where/when details and a year to find the grants or host fundraising events to financially support the anniversary celebration. Talon Bevan volunteered to help with grant writing for this event.

e. FirstNet Communications Platform

Discussion on this item was delayed until later.

f. Future AGM and Board Meeting Dates

The following dates were agreed upon:

Board of Directors meeting	Online	Saturday, April 9, 2022, 1000 hrs.
AGM and Board of Directors meetings	In person	Sunday, July 17, 2022, at 1000 and 1100 hrs., respectfully. Contingent upon availability of venue. Location to be determined.
Note: the AGM/Board meetings will conclude weekend activities of July 15-17		
Board of Directors meeting	Online	Saturday, October 15, 2022, 1000 hrs.
Retreat and Board of Directors meeting	In person	Saturday/Sunday, January 14-15, 2023, Bear's Den Retreat on Jan 14th and Board meeting on Jan 15th.

g. ASRC Winter Retreat Outcomes

The retreat was informal, with only about 12 members present. BRMRG and SAROH were not represented and AMRG members were present, but no Board representatives were in attendance. Nonetheless, there was productive and valuable discussion, summarized below.

The group had some minor comments to values and vision of ASRC. This was followed by a conversation using the SWOT analysis model (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.) Dan Brizuela will write up this discussion.

Engaging the Conferences' membership better – The ASRC is not as good as needed, to address this, Dan Brizuela is looking for a member talented in communications to help determine how best reach the ASRC members. This will likely involve establishing a social media presence, so members better know the ASRC, drafting an annual report that further showcases the Conference, etc. Any suggestions for filling this position are welcomed; a job description will be written.

Providing training and engagement around certain specialties that are more easily done at scale – man tracking, cave rescue. This idea ties into the creation of interest groups.

How to leverage the size of the Conference to better support our groups. This might include grant writing to help fund group events, gear, or even covering fuel/personal supplies.

How to help groups strike balance between being excellent at what we do versus pushing the envelope. It was felt that the right balance is having teams focus more on being great at what they need to do and the Conference focus on how to pursue leading edge items. The Conference webinar series might be an initial step towards the latter.

Growing ASRC group membership. There is recognition that the ASRC needs to grow; new teams bring new members, innovative ideas, etc. A crude target of 20% growth over the next 4 years was agreed. A short list of potential candidate teams is:

Fayette County SAR
Elkland SAR
Trot SAR
Western Maryland K9 SAR
West Virginia K9 SAR

Specific individuals will reach out to these teams. These conversations need to be tracked and efforts supported.

How do we think about facilitating the onboarding of new teams? There are a number of thoughts:

Create a one-pager for new members to communicate what the ASRC is and all about.

Create a one-pager explaining the credentialing system.

Revisit policy that the Board of Directors chooses the provisional GTO of the prospective new group. Right now, the BOD chooses an existing GTO to lead the new group. The idea is to amend this to broaden the base of who can do this and to what extent Board approval is needed. The concern is that onboarding new groups is a heavy burden on an existing GTO and to the extent this is a barrier to growth, the policy may need amending. It is recognized that Board approval gives it a level of importance.

A larger problem is finding teams that want to train to ASRC standards; it is often not worth it to them. In addition, there is loss of autonomy, the giving up of their uniform/identity, and the testing for credentialing. These are the real impediments to growth.

The less new teams are asked to change initially, the easier it will be to join. New teams don't need to meet all requirement until they put in for full status. This might lower the barrier to join but might also create a problem when there are two tiers of teams – those at the standards and those not.

Training standards and field capabilities need to be the focus for bringing in new teams.

We must figure out how to add value to existing groups, otherwise expanding will not be successful.

Lastly, the small group format of the retreat worked well for the above discussions. It may be worth repeating every 3 or so years.

VII. Good of the Order

A moment of silence was held in remembrance of Gust Argerus.

VIII. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 1732 hrs.

Respectively submitted,

Stephen McClanahan
ASRC Secretary