



**2021 Spring Members Meeting
MINUTES**

**Sunday, April 25th, 2021
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Virtual Zoom Meeting**

In attendance:

Andy Garrison
Hope Breeman
Carolyn Hoffman
Ron Rosen
John Mack
Walt Daniels
Jane Daniels
Matt Decker
John Bylancik
John Jurasek
Charles Gadol
Bill Gannett
Rich Jobsky

Suse Bell
Sreeni Nair
Daniel Chazin
Eddie Saiff
David Septimus
Peyton Riegel
Peter Reiner
Patty Lee Parmalee
Carol Chave
Doug Sohn
Kathleen Bezik, NYNJTC Executive Assistant
Josh Howard, NYNJTC Executive Director

Welcome & Introductions: Josh Howard welcomed the Members to the Spring Meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

Approval of December 6th, 2020 meeting minutes: Mr. Saiff made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bylancik, to approve the December meeting minutes. All were in favor.

Executive Director's Report:

With an overview of the previous year, Mr. Howard explained the challenges of the organization through the pandemic. Financially, we had a great year with strong contract income and expense control and the best net operating income since 2015. Mr. Howard reported that the fiscal audit will begin in May as we will continue to increase our income and maintain our expenses. In spite of some challenges, 2020 was a great year with a shift to online engagement due to COVID. We held 45 webinars and 261 new maintainers were assigned, covering over 310 sections of trails and lean-tos. Mr. Howard reported our success in placing 42 new maintainers in the Catskills bringing us down to a 5% vacancy rate.

The Invasive Strike Force recruited 175 volunteer surveyors, 107 of which were new to the program due to online engagement. These volunteers participated in 25 projects spanning 200 acres of land. The Conservation Dogs Program added three new invasive species to our early detection list.

Mr. Howard explained that although volunteer work was suspended in the beginning of the season, volunteer trail crews did an incredible amount and quality of work. Crews continue to work in New Jersey looking at re-blazing and reimagining trail networks to reduce the number of lost trail users. With an amazing season engaging users, the Conservation Corps Trail Stewards are right at the trail heads and summits greatly improving the user experience. The Trail Steward Program has expanded to volunteer based programs in Fahnstock and Ashokan Rail Trail Stewards consists of over 60 individuals.

Map Sales and the demand for maps has doubled from the previous year. Avenza map downloads have reached over 60k.

Mr. Howard explained that the goal of the organization is to be fiscally sustainable by 2023. The Darlington Schoolhouse will remain closed to the public with minimal use by staff. In the late summer/early fall we will re-evaluate and reconsider opening the office.

The Trail Conference filed a motion to intervene on the plan to building a hydroelectric plant at the Ashokan Reservoir. The company has withdrawn their request and will seek other locations. The Trail Conference supports clean energy but not at the cost of the trail and lands. Mr. Howard reported of similar challenges at West Hook Mountain and encroachment on the Long Path.

The Trail Conference Centennial Gala is planned for October 16th, 2021 at the Bear Mountain Inn. Mr. Howard noted that more information will be shared shortly and there is a focus on the safety and health of the attendees.

As the Trail Conference shared a statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the start of 2020, we continue to work with a steering committee to look at how we can improve access to the outdoors and reduce barriers.

Mr. Rosen reported that the A.T. VISTA program for 2021 will be a virtual event with local hikes for small groups. The plan is to have the 2022 VISTA an in person event and the website, atvista2021.org, will have more information. For any questions, you can email Mr. Rosen at raisinron@gmail.com.

Ms. Hoffman asked Mr. Howard what the Trail Conference forecasts for the numbers on visitation to trails. Mr. Howard anticipates a decrease in the number of trail users with other outdoor events opening. Working with our partners, we report an increase in visitation with record numbers and the impact on the trails has been significant. Mr. Howard explained that the challenge is with public safety and parking issues. The Trail Conference has partnered with New York State Parks and the DEC to have more stewards at high-use areas, included the Catskills and Breakneck Ridge. The Trail Conference is also working with partners to identify hotspots and put as many boots on the ground as possible to report back to the parks with trail user information and data. With the current record number of visitors to our website, the Trail Conference content team is working on sharing more information and resources with users before they hit the trails and to have unified language across all parks and organizations.

Mr. Saiff congratulated the board and staff for the “brightest budget report in the past 5 or 6 years”.

Seeing no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m. All were in favor.

Recorded by Kathleen Bezik.