

Denver Group Council Minutes
February 12, 2014

In Attendance: Jeff Flax, Marty Billings, Dave Hutchison, Sandy McRae, Alex Petre, Kevin Schaal, Neil Schliemann, Valerie Walker, Roger Wendell, and Jan Monnier. **Absent:** No one.

Guests: Matt Biscan, new CMC State Board member, Brenda Porter CMC Director for Volunteer and Member Engagement.

1. **Call to Order:** Jeff called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the January meeting minutes as prepared. Motion passed unanimously.
3. **Budget and Financial:** Neil reported the January net gain was \$1700 higher than budgeted. Year to date we are under budget by \$8300. Nearly the entire budget shortfall is in revenue, primarily in school tuition and membership dues. Cash remains strong with \$119,000 in the checking and saving accounts.
4. **Denver Group Website Update:** One person replied to the ad in February's Mile High Mountaineer for a volunteer to assist with coding and maintaining the DG website. Jeff discussed what work was needed with the potential applicant, but since then, there has been no further communication.
5. **CMC Website:** Improvements to the functioning of the website were accomplished with a release in February. A list of these improvements were e-mailed by the CMC Web Team and included:
 - a. Improved calendar view.
 - b. Improved trip roster export to a printable PDF format.
 - c. Improved navigation for trip leaders to edit trips.
 - d. Schools and educational events will have the ability to include multiple-tiered pricing within a single school posting form Group, Non-Group, Leader, Member and Non-Member.
 - e. Adventure Travel trips also have expanded pricing options to extend multi-tier offerings to participants.
 - f. Improved leader management system. This enhancement allows membership services staff to manage a member's affiliation within the Manage Members section and can change current, inactive, or emeritus leader status, group admin status, or school director status.
 - g. Leaders must edit themselves off of a trip through the edit trip window and the leader dropdowns.
 - h. Duplicating a trip now automatically adds Trip Leader and Co-Leaders to the roster.
6. **Annual Dinner Budget:** The Green Center at Colorado School of Mines has been reserved for the 2014 DG Annual Dinner to be held on Sunday 11/9/14. Dr. Jon Kedrowski, renowned for sleeping on all 55 Colorado 14er summits from sunset to sunrise in 95 days in 2011, will be the guest speaker. Council was requested to allocate \$2500 to support this event, \$500 more than was allocated last year. Roger moved, Valerie seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
 - a. The speaker's fee will be \$500 plus the expense of a hotel room for one night. Last year's speaker's fee was \$300 and did not include the cost of a hotel room.

- b. The charges for use of the Green Center will be higher than last year, but not sure exactly how much higher.
 - c. For these reasons, it was recommended that DGC increase the money allocated to support the annual dinner.
 - d. The speaker's book, "*Sleeping on the Summits: Colorado Fourteener High Bivys*" will be on sale at the dinner and the author will donate \$5.00 to CMC for each book sold at the event.
7. **DG Owned SPOT Beacon:** DG inherited an emergency SPOT Beacon, also known as a Spot Satellite GPS Messenger, which is used to notify emergency services of the SPOT's GPS location to initiate an emergency search and rescue response. However, the beacon requires an annual subscription fee of \$150. It was proposed that this cost be absorbed into general funds. Kevin moved, Sandy seconded and the motion passed unanimously for DG to absorb these costs. The beacon is considered appropriate for Ski Mountaineering, BMS or maybe HAMS for use in their schools. The CMC office, initially handled by Roger, will manage the process for loaning out the beacon to the school leader.
8. **CPR Class:** Jeff mentioned that the CPR class was scheduled to start soon and that it would be an add-on to Wilderness First Aid. The class is to be taught by a new instructor since Bea S. will no longer be teaching it.
9. **DG Schools and Policies:** Through some recent discussion about the process for proposing, developing and approving new DG schools, it became obvious that a formalized procedure was lacking. Jan presented some comments and insight into some recurring themes regarding how DG schools operate and issues with current practices.
 - a. Coordination between schools could be improved, such as between WTS, BKPS and WCS, between BMS, HAMS and BICS, between KTS, BMT and HAMS.
 - b. We should strive to insure that the timing of schools don't overlap, since we work with primarily the same target audience.
 - c. Jan shared the following feedback from current or former school directors: administrative demands, including budgeting have become increasingly more time-consuming. The political environment has become increasingly more challenging. Teaching classes requires a lot of time and effort for the perceived benefit – plus the volunteer school leader still has to pay membership dues of \$100 or more. Questions regarding liability and litigation are not uncommon.
 - d. It is believed that schools are the primary source of new members and that for DG to be financially sound, schools need to run at capacity as often as possible. Therefore, DG should establish and document objectives to achieve that goal. We should:
 - Identify and document the skills taught in each school, set clear expectations for graduation from each school, proactively identify potential new schools based on member input, establish a method to build on current school offerings with the goal of improving member experience in the mountains, and insure that specific skills are taught the same way regardless of which school is teaching it.
 - Improve support for school directors by have signed school director agreement from all schools so volunteers know how long they are committed for.
 - Establish mechanism for handling member grievances in schools, for instructors and participants alike.
 - Establish school progression plans to demonstrate various pathways for member to advance their skill sets when taking successive DG schools.

- A small committee composed of representatives from various schools should be formed to meet, discuss and brainstorm ideas for improvements. Questions to be answered may include, how does DGC evaluate a newly proposed school? Should council ask other school directors to review a proposed new school and provide their recommendation?

10. Role of DG Councilors in the Management of DG Schools:

The question of how DG Councilors can take a more active role in the management of DG schools was discussed. DG councilors could act as advisors to provide assistance in the budgeting function, or the support could be more functional or operational in nature. More people need to be involved in the functioning of our schools than just the school director. The intent is that a councilor would be a liaison between the school and DG council, attend school meetings, provide support, and perhaps inform the school of DG's and CMC's bigger picture. Councilors were asked to consider what they would be willing to do.

11. Social Media: Lynn Petre, Alex's wife, volunteered to work on Social Media issues for DG, such as promoting or advertising activities, events, and schools via twitter, Facebook and others.

12. CMC Volunteer and Member Engagement: Brenda Porter, Director of Volunteer and Member Engagement presented a 3-page information package, attached to these minutes, describing the results of the four surveys done over the previous ten years on membership issues. From the data mining done on these surveys, strategies are being developed and tactical plans put together to address CMC's membership decline. Brenda highlighted the following items:

- Calls are made to new members to inform them of the "how to's" of CMC membership (ie, how to sign up for a trip, etc.). Brenda reports that most of the people she contacts have already engaged with the club to some extent.
- Brenda is working to streamline the process of welcoming new members.
- Two volunteer open houses to discuss volunteer recruitment and volunteer opportunities have been planned.
- Mountain Fest has been scheduled and will take place on March 21st.
- Teleconferences or webinars were created as a way for new members to learn more about CMC.
- A CMC club-wide summit has been planned for May 3rd with a focus on membership issues. For this event, Brenda is getting advice from experts on national membership trends and how we can reverse our club's membership decline.
- Brenda recommended we create a staff position to focus on membership.

13. March Snacks: Sandy will bring snacks for March's meeting which is scheduled for 3/12/14.

14. Adjournment: Council adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Schaal
3/1/13

Attachments:
3-page handout from Brenda Porter

Summary of previous surveys/interviews conducted on membership expired members

CMC Survey Summary Results

Colorado Mountain Club members join for 4 main reasons:

- 1) Get outdoors
- 2) Exercise
- 3) Make friends
- 4) Learn outdoor skills

Almost no members join to support the CMC Mission, all were recreational. The majority of our members hike more frequently than any of our other activities.

The main reasons CMC members don't renew their membership is for the following reasons:

- 1) Didn't have a positive outdoor experience – didn't feel welcome, barriers to enter (Denver's hiking classification system was highest dissatisfaction stated)
- 2) Member expectations not met – didn't find value in membership (this can be associated with not having used membership, or didn't think the time and money of participation was worth it, or offerings didn't meet their demands). From our largest survey (Bianca e Nero, this was 77% of respondents who left)
- 3) Didn't take advantage of membership – lack of time or didn't join any activities
- 4) Lack of ease of membership use from beginning to end – Rules and processes aren't member friendly

In a typical recent year, about 1000 people joined the CMC. About 1250 left that year.

Of the 1000 who join:

580 join to go on outings in order to have an outdoor experience and to meet other outdoor-people

160 join to volunteer

150 join to go to schools and classes

60 join to be involved in some kind of conservation effort (or want some of their money used that way)

50 join to participate in the press, youth programs, or museum

Of the 1250 who leave:

962 leave because their "customer" expectations aren't met

150 leave because life circumstances have changed

75 leave without any explanation

63 leave because their political views are out-of-sync with the majority of members' views

Of the 962 whose customer expectations aren't met:

452 leave because the benefits of participation are weak compared to time/money spent (not meeting expectations, not a perceived value)

188 leave because of lack of ease of membership use from beginning to end – Rules and processes aren't member friendly

163 leave because of a poor experience with trip leaders (not a positive outdoor experience)

150 leave because there aren't the right outings (not meeting member expectations/demands)

137 leave because they didn't get involved. Didn't take advantage of membership

100 leave because group experiences weren't positive (didn't have a positive outdoor experience)

50 leave because they volunteered in some way and felt disrespected

37 leave because the club isn't focused enough on main reasons people join

If member expectations are met, 5% of members will tell five of their hiking friends per year to join the CMC, 10% of whom will try the CMC, and 77% who will stay beyond one year.

1) CMC demographics

- a. General summary of demographics
 - i. Greater than 50% of CMC members are within the age range of 50-69
 - ii. CMC has 50% male and 50% female members
 - iii. Over 1/3 of CMC members choose a recreational activity that includes walking/hiking as their preferred activity.
 - iv. Average income among members is \$70-79K
 - v. Majority of members have completed a 4 year college degree
 - vi. Over 50% of members are married
 - vii. Less than 35% of members have children at home

2) Top 4 drivers of membership satisfaction

- 1. Positive Outdoor Experience. Trip and School leaders teach, empower, respect, listen, and provide a positive and friendly customer experience to members.
- 2. Offerings meet member demands
- 3. Ease of membership use from beginning (join) to end. Few barriers to enter.
- 4. Perceived value of membership

3) Improvement plan based on top drivers of member satisfaction

- a. Positive Outdoor Experience
 - i. Utilize statewide leadership training to improve or add soft skills training. See Leaders as Ambassadors #18 (Brenda)
 - ii. Create web and video/based education tools to increase soft skill training among all leaders (Brenda)
 - iii. Create web/video based welcome to all members to educate them on CMC practices and set expectations on trips (Brenda)
 - iv. Hire Member and Volunteer Engagement Director to improve and increase statewide volunteer training. Focus on CMC mission/legacy and soft skills. Encourage and educate leaders to become ambassadors. (Katie)
- b. Offerings meet member demands
 - i. Send out post trip and school surveys to determine member satisfaction with offerings (Brenda)
 - ii. Compare the demand and supply of CMC trips to determine if there is a balance. (Example: 75% of survey respondents want doggie hikes, but CMC only offers 3% doggie hikes) (Brenda)
 - iii. Offer incentives to trip leaders to lead trips where supply does not meet demand (Brenda)
 - iv. Monitor the Outdoor Industry Report to determine current outdoor trends (Katie)
- c. Ease of membership use from beginning (join) to end. Few barriers to enter.
 - i. Survey new members on website "Join" and "Renew" process (Brenda)
 - ii. Survey new members on member welcome packet. Did they feel it told them what they wanted/needed to know about CMC membership (Brenda)
 - iii. Survey new members on trip/event/class sign up process on website (Brenda)
 - iv. Survey new members on whether or not they attended a new member orientation (Brenda)
 - v. Survey new members on thoughts of T&T, Rucksack (Brenda)
 - vi. Survey new members on actual trip/event/class they took (Brenda)
 - vii. Survey new members on renewal process. (Brenda)
 - viii. Offer auto-renewal option (Rachel to investigate)
 - ix. Offer monthly membership option at a higher price point than 1x annual fee (hold off for now)
 - x. Implement customer relationship management system (work in progress with website)
- d. Perceived value of membership

- i. Update marketing materials and membership communications with a unified message focusing on the mission and legacy of the organization in order to pivot away from the exclusive service-based experience. (Rachel and Brenda)
- ii. Create a position for Engagement Director to implement membership engagement plan. See item #3 on member retention (Brenda)
- iii. Work with Groups to offer monthly membership fee and/or tiered payment structure. Shifts consumer conversation from \$150 (Denver) to less than \$15/month. Address concerns from fixed income members which based on demographic data is a high percentage. (hold off – can't do now based on website)
- iv. Leaders as ambassadors – Train leaders on mission and legacy of organization so they can tell trip participants. (Brenda)

2014 Themes for Director of Membership and Volunteer Development

- Theme - Membership Engagement
 - Develop and facilitate systemized pathways to engage new members in positive outdoor experiences early in their membership. Work closely with State and Groups to expand or develop new effective resources (welcome communication, orientations, trainings, trips, mentors, etc.)
 - Enhance strategies to encourage positive experiences for current members in recreation, conservation, and educational programs of the CMC through video, webinars, and training of CMC Ambassador Leaders. A direct result will be members' understanding of and engagement in the CMC's mission, programs, thus increasing CMC's impact.
- Theme - Volunteer Engagement
 - Conduct a CMC organization-wide Needs Assessment of volunteer positions and develop a capacity-building
 - Develop strategies for effective volunteer recruitment, training, support, and incentives
 - Create and implement a comprehensive volunteer database.
 - Work with and communicate with CMC Groups to enhance pathways for members to become volunteers. For example, create systems for CMC School students to become school volunteers.
- Theme - Adventure Travel
 - Implement AT Strategic Plan with focus on administrative efficiency
 - Build volunteer capacity through a systematic mentoring program and encouraging past AT leaders to lead more trips with logistical support ie: "Canned-Trips"
- Theme - Safety & Leadership
 - EAP Annual Review & Training
 - Build capacity of State Safety and Leadership Committee
 - Continue to manage USDA FS Special Use Permits with CMC Schools.