

Denver Group Council Minutes
May 14, 2014

In Attendance: Jeff Flax, Marty Billings, Dave Hutchison, Alex Petre, Kevin Schaal, Neil Schliemann, Valerie Walker, Roger Wendell. **Absent:** Sandy McRae.

Guests: Jan Monnier, Brenda Porter.

1. **Call to Order:** Jeff called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Item #9 in April's original minutes was wrong and has been corrected. A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to approve the amended April meeting minutes.
3. **Budget and Financial:** Council expressed a big THANKS to Neil for all his hard work!
 - a. Notes from Neil's April Budget: April net income was positive and over budget by \$4,900. Year to date net income is \$700 over budget. Total YTD revenue is \$7,800 below budget, but total expenses are also \$8,500 below budget. Overall the budget status has improved in most areas. G&A revenues are under budget by \$10,600. Membership numbers fell in April with a decrease of 92 memberships and 83 members. YTD we are down 162 memberships, 6.3%, and 135 members, 4.4%. These are still lower losses than last year but the April loss was well over half the loss for the year.
 - b. The finance committee met on April 11. Minutes from this meeting are attached.
 - c. The projected rate of inflation to be used in both the 2014 and 2015 budgets is 1.8%. The methodology for estimating revenue related to membership dues was finalized. Neil can provide detailed information. The estimated revenue for next year is between \$59,500 and \$68,700 depending on if April's membership numbers or February's membership numbers are used.
 - d. Budgets are due back to Neil by mid-June and he is working toward a July 1 date for having the budget finalized.
 - e. The State's Fees for Services (FFS) was discussed. At present, it is anticipated that FFS will exceed dues revenue. In order to get back in balance, either revenue needs to increase or costs need to decrease. Accordingly, DG schools were asked to contain costs as much as possible. DG is looking at alternative ways to get the accounting piece done besides by State.
 - f. After State's FFS, the next highest expense is room charges which are approximately \$44,000. Council recommended that June's agenda contain an item to form a sub-committee to investigate alternate places to meet, not in Golden, in an attempt to reduce room expenses.
 - g. Next, credit card fees which amount to 3% of credit card charges were discussed. It was decided not to allocate these fees back to the schools making the charges, but all credit card fees would come out of the general fund.
 - h. State charged DG \$100 for each of 7 open wall climbs held as CMC trips at the AMC. This is different from the way these climbs have been handled in the past. Since any CMC trip is open to any qualified member regardless of the group they belong to, Council felt that DG getting 100% of these charges was unfair. Neil will ask State for full or partial credit. State's new policy is that these wall climbs will still be open to any CMC member, but State will work on a more equitable solution for how the expense for these climbs will be charged since State really wants to maintain these climbs in the trip calendar.
4. **School Director's Summit:** The next school director's summit is planned for June 17th.

5. **Report on the April School Director's Summit:** Jan Monnier who is the Denver Group School Liaison reported on her recent efforts. Her report included the following:
- Jan worked to get information on all DG schools into Trails and Timberline.
 - She routinely refers school directors to the appropriate resources as needed.
 - She worked to improve coordination between schools, such as between HAMS and AAIRE for 2015.
 - She worked to make the schools more professional by replacing some of the less professional, homemade school manuals with more professional manuals.
 - Jan reported that BMS is moving to a modular system, as has been discussed in previous Council meetings. This includes running Basic Rock School and Rock Seconding School through BMS.
 - She is working on unifying school curriculums.
 - She is working to have a good, accurate School Director's Manual and that the School Director's Agreements get signed in a timely manner.
 - She is planning to implement a School Instructor's Program.
 - Jan solicited Council for ideas for the small group breakout sessions that are held in conjunction with School Directors Meetings. Topics mentioned were 1) marketing of CMC in general and of DG schools in particular, 2) standardizing skills, 3) standardizing class format, and 4) standardizing field days. It was expressed that whatever topics are covered in the breakout sessions, the school directors should buy into the material being presented and not have it be a point of contention.

In another matter, Jan raised an issue about how long DG schools can keep doing field trips on Forest Service land when we don't always follow Forest Service policy. The issue is that if a professional guide service runs a similar activity, they must be licensed and obtain required permits. CMC isn't licensed and it's not clear if we always obtain required permits. The argument is that CMC schools compete with professional guide services but potentially bypass some of the Forest Service's policies. One potential solution is to describe the DG school's field trip as a regular CMC trips. This does not violate Forest Service policy. However, it was not unanimously agreed upon that that we had a problem. One example cited was that WTS does notify Forest Service of their planned activity and of the expected number of participants. There was no resolution to this issue.

6. **Endorsement for Eliminating the Hiker Rating System:** A letter from Steve Bonowski endorsing the elimination of the hiker rating system was read. The letter is attached to these minutes.
7. **Report from Leader's Gathering:** Council heard a report on the Leaders Gathering that was held on April 24th.
- Trip leaders felt members are generally dissatisfied with the hiker classification system.
 - They also felt that there are too many hoops for members to jump through to participate in club hikes.
 - One problem with the hiker classification system is that a hiker's classification never expires and the hiker never has to be re-certified, so a member who once was a capable D hiker may no longer have the same capability.
 - The hiker classification system as it functions today is not reliable. Instances were cited where a D hiker was the slowest person on the specific trip being referenced.
 - None of the 15-18 trip leaders present at the meeting were opposed to eliminating the hiker classification system.

- When asked if leaders would quit leading hikes because of eliminating the hiker classification system, the resounding answer was no.

If the hiker classification system was eliminated, any member could sign up for any hike and the trip leader could either accept or reject that person from the trip. Trips would continue to be classified so participants would understand the difficulty of the hike. Leaders present at the Gathering felt they already had, and readily accepted, the responsibility to screen trip participants to make sure each individual on the outing was qualified to make the trip without being a liability to the hike. Most leaders said it's what they do all the time.

Two questions were posed to Council: 1) Does DG want to move forward on eliminating the hiker classification system? 2) If so, what would be the next appropriate step?

Council decided that the next appropriate step would be to take the summary consensus from the Leader's Gathering to Denver Safety and Leadership for their consideration and comment.

8. **Meeting with CMC Acting CEO:** Jeff and Dave will meet with Matt Stevens, CMC's acting CEO, and discuss State's Fees for Services and membership decline during the week of May 19.
9. **Nominating Committee:** Alex is heading up the nominating committee for next year's DG Council elections. There are 3 council members whose terms are expiring – Dave, Neil and Craig who resigned from council earlier this year. Alex has gotten agreement from three DG members to serve with him as the nominating committee, Erin Thompson, Brendan Tatum and Dave Covill. Roger moved and Dave seconded the motion to accept the nominating committee as described above.
10. **Development of DG Mission Statement:** The purpose of an organization's mission statement is to state the reason why the group exists. The Mission Statement also gives guidance on making decisions about priorities, actions and responsibilities. It was suggested that reviewing the Seattle Mountaineers' mission statement might be useful as we work to prepare our mission statement. Following that discussion, Dave polled Council with four questions;
 - 1) What is the purpose of the Denver Group?
 - 2) What should the Denver Group stop doing?
 - 3) What is more important than adding or retaining members?
 - 4) Why has the Denver Group NOT gone extinct?Because the meeting had run past its allotted time, the Council's responses were not captured. Hopefully they will be presented at the next Council meeting.

11. **June Snacks:** Jeff will bring snacks for June's meeting which is scheduled for 6/11/14.

12. **Adjournment:** Council adjourned at 9:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Schaal
5/27/14

Attachments: Bonowski letter supporting elimination of hiker classification system
DGC Finance Committee Meeting, 4/11/14

May 14, 2014

TO: Jeff Flax, Denver Group Chair, and members of the Denver Group Council

FROM: Steve Bonowski, past Group Chair & Council member

RE: Elimination of the hiker rating system

Dear friends. Thank you for offering the opportunity to speak on this issue. As some background, the hiker rating system originated in the 1970s, before I was living in Colorado, as a means for allowing leaders of a large CMC Group to know about their hikers. Most leaders did not know each and every member of the Denver Group.

The last major revision to the system occurred in early 1988. At that time, WTS was made a requirement to obtain a "C" rating and became a prerequisite to enter BMS. Two members of the workgroup that proposed the changes to Council, from 26+ years ago, are still active in Club leadership. Those individuals are John Lindner and myself.

I don't think any detail is needed to support a statement that life and the Club have changed greatly in the past 26 years. I agree that the hiker classification system has outlived its usefulness and is no longer a meaningful bar that assists leaders to determine hiker abilities or appropriateness of a given trip for a given hiker. I endorse your plan to remove what has become a bureaucratic hindrance to keeping members in the Denver Group.

I encourage you to consider keeping education and training as bars to achieve for being able to go on certain trips. WTS, or Backpack, probably are still good prerequisites for entering BMS. However, schools need to adjust to the reality that prospective students may not have the time to do a BMS, for example, in the current allotted time. As an aside, the basic structure of BMS has not changed markedly since I was a student in 1986; maybe 1 or 2 fewer lectures. A suggestion that BMS become a modular program; like the BMSs in Boulder and Pikes Peak; has merit.

I continue to endorse and support Linda Lawson's recommendation about creating a Denver Group meet-up, where members can sign up on a Friday for a Saturday hike, for example. I also support Dave Hutchison's suggestion about having a Basic Skills program; one lecture and one field day; to convey not only some beginner skills, but also help members get an idea of what WTS is like. I would charge something for it, however. People tend to not give good credibility to "free" stuff.

Thank you again for allowing the comments. I am happy to answer any questions you may have (altho will be away from home this evening).

Steve Bonowski

climbersteveb@gmail.com

AGENDA

DGC Finance Committee Mtg
6:00 PM April 11, 2014

1. Inflation Estimate – Attached is a summary of several sites and sources I reviewed.
2. Dues Projection – I used a memberships and members methodology to estimate Dues revenue at our February totals. Memberships - \$71,066, Members - \$66,292. The current year budget for Dues is \$81,938.
3. Budget Calendar – the prior year calendar and an estimate for current year are attached.
4. State Fee For Service – The State has said they will use the CPI to budget their FFS. They will also adjust for anticipated losses. With lower membership dues, the gap between our revenue and their charges will widen. The current budget for FFS is \$83,778.
5. Credit Card Fees – A schedule of estimated Credit Card Fees is attached. These fees would be budgeted in each budget shown in the first month of the budget year. The Actual 2014 credit card fees will be billed to these budgets as soon as they are available.
6. Forms and Format - a package of forms is attached as an example
7. Instructor Gifts – The general direction given by the council was to provide general guidance, but no figure. Tell directors to use good judgment. The guidance given last year was as follows: In reviewing the prior year actual amounts we noticed a significant difference in the amounts spent for instructor gifts. Please consider these costs carefully and control them as much as is possible. Contact the Schools Liaison for help with coordinating discounted purchases through CMC sponsors.
8. Give Back % - The target amount for this year is 15%. Should this be changed? Also, if a school or section wants to spend their balance on something that benefits the Group, should this be allowed, ie; scholarships to members, equipment for student/instructor safety such as SPOTS, beacons, survival gear, etc. How would this be approved and how would we handle it budgetarily? Do we want to build an incentive for running lean and mean, like allowing 50% of the balance to be rolled forward to the following budget year to be used to hold tuition steady or purchase needed supplies?
9. Reductions in State Services – The State Fee For Services is our biggest budget item. Do we want to pursue doing the accounting for ourselves, or doing the customer service for ourselves, instead of paying the State to do it?
10. Budget Support – What will be most helpful to our Directors and section heads?

As a special assignment, and NOT part of the meeting minutes, I took some time to plot the DG membership numbers. I'm not sure this is the best way to show the data, so I'm open to ideas for how to improve it. Also note, it's just DG, not the entire CMC (although it would be easy to do both).

To smooth out ups and downs for the % loss in members, I did a 4-month moving average. If desired, just the moving average line could be displayed and not the month by month line and symbols.

