**Kitsap Mountaineers Executive Committee Meeting March 20, 2014**

Executive Committee Members Present:

Jeff Schrepple, Dave Burton, Sue Labrie, Jon DeArman, Mark Thibault, Christine Grenier, Dianne Carey, Rick Gillatt, and Vern Brown.

Meeting commenced at 5:45 pm

BRANCH CHAIR REPORT : Jeff started the meeting by reiterating his desire to continue to do as much EXCOM business as possible by email with the understanding that there may be some miscommunications and misunderstandings along the way when using this media. He mentioned that he answers emails fairly late at night and in the process may have offended John Davis so he sent a note of apology to him. Jeff also asked that if members read a mean tone in any of his emails, that is never the intent and a request for clarification will gladly draw a response.

 That being said, Jeff also reminded everyone that the point he was trying to get across to John is one that he still wants to follow and that is for discussions in EXCOM meetings to be useful. We just have too much to do in each meeting that we don’t have time to vent or debate things which we can not influence. If a member of the EXCOM doesn’t like something, it is OK to bring that up, but Jeff asked that the individual also offer a solution to the subject of their ire. Likewise, unsubstantiated “facts” (like that will never work) don’t add any value either. If there are differing opinions on a subject they will all be aired, hopefully only once, but after everyone has had their say, a vote will be taken and we will move on.

Minutes from the February meeting: Subject minutes were sent out ahead of the meeting and were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Budget Report and Equipment Accountability: Dianne mentioned that we are having some problems with financial reports from Headquarters. The March report is late as was the January report and another person on the Headquarters accounting team has left the Mountaineers adding to a long list of personnel turnover. She believes the branch is in the black by over $1,000 but without a report from headquarters, that can not be confirmed.

 Dianne also mentioned that she finally has a pretty good handle on the branch common equipment in that she has a good inventory of what we own and a record of who currently has it. Sue has picked up some items from Katha and Greg now has the projector. Jon will try to contact Laura Rightmyer to have her contact Sue to return some things still in her possession since she left the Mountaineers. When all that equipment is accounted for, Dianne will publish a final list to be posted on the branch website. Jeff will prepare a draft equipment policy after talking to other branches to see how they account for their common items.

 Finally, Dianne noted that she will need budget submissions from each activity chair in the near future to assemble a branch budget by the end of June. Instructions will be sent to the activity chairs in early April. The Mountaineers fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30th.

MC Meeting Report: Jeff started by saying this report would be shorter than usual as he wanted to be sure that the group discussion of the ED and branch questions could take place. Accordingly, he would only cover things of importance to our branch.

 The first thing he covered was the Social Media policy which was adopted with minor changes at the MC meeting for forwarding to the Board of Directors for a vote. This policy was emailed to all EXCOM members before the February meeting. Jeff recommended that the branch follow this policy until we have some solid data and information with which to ask for changes. Some EXCOM members were concerned about the policy asking that we enter a vague description of the trip on the social media site to force the reader to the Mountaineers site, but Jeff said that the word vague is in itself vague so that each could interpret what to put on the social media site. As for gathering information to possibly ask for future changes, Jeff asked that a review of the guest policy be entered as an agenda item on the MC meeting for March 17th but Dan said the agenda was too full already and deferred that discussion until April 21st. Among the topics to be discussed are the numbers of guests who actually become members after one or two free trips and also how we can compete with Meetup when it has no waiver, no limit on trips, and lots fewer regulations than the Mountaineers do. He also asked to see what kind of trips the Mountaineers insurance policy requires us to have waivers for. Jeff recounted how one guest on a Tacoma trip refused to sign a waiver. In that case the leader formally, in front of the group, announced that the guest was no longer officially a part of the Mountaineers trip, although he did not have the authority to make him leave USFS lands so the individual tagged along anyway.

 Jeff also discussed the issue of sending branch emails. Tacoma and Bellingham are authorized to send their own branch emails after having received training from the headquarters. All the rest of the branches prepare their emails and have their branch liaisons send the emails for them. Sue and Christine have expressed an interest in taking the necessary training needed to send the emails so Jeff will check to see what kind of training is needed.

 There seem to be significant problems with budgets and accounting as well as high turnover in that department. A number of chairs presented very specific examples of problems affecting them and Dan promised to carry those concerns to Leann.

 Dan and Martinique will meet with us at the next regularly scheduled EXCOM meeting on April 17th. Sue will arrange the schedule to meet with her work schedule and meeting will be at the Cabin.

ACTIVITY COMMITTEE REPORTS (from committee chairs who were present)

Sea kayaking: No items to post on next Headquarters Activity notice (April 15 to May 31) as the basic kayak course will have started on April 1st. At least 6 people have already enrolled and a 7th is possible. The *Kitsap Sun* will report on our Washington Coast cleanup on April 15th.

Conservation and Education: Rick spoke about the Outdoor Learning Center (OLC) Steering Committee meeting that he, Sue, and I attended on March 19th in Seattle. The OLC is a proposed collaboration between the Mountaineers Foundation and the Mountaineers to jointly develop and improve the Cabin and the Rhododendron Preserve properties to provide a low cost environmental learning center at that location. The steering committee approved the plan developed by Irene Farnsworth and she will present it to the Foundation Board for approval on April 8th. The Mountaineers have already approved it so if the Foundation approves, as well, the project will begin shortly with a professional use assessment plan.

Hiking: A Kitsap Leaders Weekend is planned for Memorial Day weekend somewhere around Mount Saint Helens and an Introduction to Hiking class is planned for the 26th of March. The Branch Open House will probably now be held on the 27th of April instead of the 13th.

Art: Dave Burton has taken a position to teach art for the Poulsbo Parks and Recreation Department. As a result, all his class preparation can be used for our branch art classes at no cost to us.

Photography: Monthly Workshops and Field Trips will continue through November and 30 people attended the most recent outing, however, the majority of attendees were not Mountaineers members. Joshua Bone has agreed to take over the chairmanship of the committee after Jon’s year is completed.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on the Quarterly Membership Meeting: Sue asked if we could postpone the subject meeting from the 13th of April to the 27th. The plan is still for a meal, a hike (to the Big Tree), a gear swap, and a presentation by a couple who hiked in Scotland recently. It was agreed that the time necessary to prepare and conduct a good meeting outweighed the need to conduct the meeting on the 13th.

Vote on Rick’s out-of-cycle budget request: Jeff started this discussion by noting that next year’s budget submission will soon be required and that activity contributions to the branch budget last year were not generally complete, if they were submitted at all. In the absence of input, Dianne does a great job guessing what everyone needs, however, for future budgets Jeff would like the activity chairs to submit activity budgets to Dianne on time which support the recently developed branch action plans. He realizes the annual budget submissions will not perfectly estimate all purchases needed for the upcoming year, but he expects it to cover 90% of what is needed. To offer an incentive for more accurate activity submissions, Jeff stated that for those things not included in the annual budget submissions, activity chairs would have to explain their request at an EXCOM meeting and the EXCOM would approve or deny the purchase by a voice vote. This methodology is the reason for Rick and Dave presenting budget requests at this meeting.

 Rick’s budget request for educational materials in the amount of $668.50 was read by Sue from an email at the February meeting but the EXCOM members had several questions about the request which Sue was unable to answer. At this meeting, Rick decided to withdraw the request as those materials can probably be purchased with OLC funds if the proposal is approved on April 8th.

NEW BUSINESS

Vote on Dave’s out-of-cycle budget request: Using the same rationale as above for submission to an EXCOM vote, Dave Burton explained the need for webcam for use in the upcoming art classes. The cost would be $79.99 and it would be available for other activities as well. The EXCOM voted unanimously to approve this request.

Finalize Responses to ED and branch questions: Jeff asked for EXCOM comment to the subject questions which had not been fully addressed by an earlier email request. Some of the most significant comments follow:

1. While the general health of the branch is not very good it is showing signs of significant improvement, and the proposed Outdoor Learning Center could be a huge boost for the branch and the entire West Sound area.
2. None of the activities has a succession plan in place, but all hope that the development of more leaders will lead to more candidates stepping up to assume these positions in the future. There were some who felt this optimism is unwarranted because recent experience has shown that the training and delegation of new leaders has not always resulted in leaders who will lead anything.
3. While the photography activity is important to the branch, it is unlikely that any new members will join the Mountaineers in order to become a photographer. The more likely scenario is that current photographers may join the Mountaineers or Mountaineer trips to take advantage of the hikes or climbs which could result in great opportunities for photographs.
4. Some members see the current push to grow membership in the Mountaineers to pre-2008 numbers as a smokescreen covering the more serious problem of rebuilding a club that had its headquarters disintegrate with the move to Sand Point in 2008. In other words, concentrating on membership growth avoids the more serious problems with headquarters management.
5. Too many rules discourage creativity and enjoyment.
6. Not having the ability and authority to send branch emails limits our effectiveness and viability. Jeff is not yet convinced that this is a true statement since we can already send branch emails if we send them to our branch liaison to do so.
7. Rosters, when we do get them, are not extremely useful because lack of a street address hinders carpool planning, which may adversely affect trip turnout.
8. Youth qualification is difficult, time-consuming, and sometimes impossible.

Preview of items for April and May EXCOM meetings:

April Meeting: This meeting will be entirely devoted to the EXCOM meeting with the Mountaineers Executive Director and President. Sue and Jeff will meet with them for two or three hours before the EXCOM meeting and will not have the time nor do they plan to use an entire EXCOM meeting to report on those discussions. Accordingly, Jeff told the EXCOM members to feel free to ask questions about issues important to them, even if those subjects may have been discussed in the more restricted meeting. He also asked that discussions be cordial and constructive with solutions proposed if possible. This request should not be interpreted as to just “play nice’ and avoid contentious issues, but it does mean the questioners should remain respectful in their manner and especially avoid name calling.

May Meeting: Jeff gave the EXCOM members a heads up on the May meeting as no time will be available at the end of the April meeting to give a preview. Items on the agenda for the meeting will include:

1. A safety presentation by Mindy Roberts and Suzy Diesen to discuss the top safety problems identified from the incident reports and other safety topics. We may invite all leaders to attend this discussion.
2. An opening discussion on important issues concerning the branch bylaws. Jeff has identified the following issues but asks that all EXCOM members read the bylaws prior to the meeting to discuss other issues if they are important to them:
	1. Should activity chairs be voting members of the EXCOM?
	2. How many mandated meetings should the EXCOM have?
	3. Should we continue to have at-large members?
3. Mark will lead a discussion about how to adjust the branch website to supplement the new Mountaineers website, which is planned for rollout on May 5th.
4. Is there a workable solution to offering dues assistance to low income members without being too intrusive in our ability to confirm such status?

Closing Remarks: None.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

April EXCOM meeting will start at 5:30 on the 17th of April at the Kitsap Cabin.