

**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, February 20, 2025, 6:30 – 8:30 pm via Zoom**

*Our Mission*

To assist in creating a positive environment for the enjoyment of equines. Through our leadership and proactive approach, we promote, facilitate and co-ordinate equestrian-related activities for Alberta.

*Our 5-Year Goal*

We are Alberta's most respected and trusted equine community with 30,000 members.

**1. Call to Order**

Jason called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm and read the existing AEF Land Acknowledgement aloud. The board meeting was co-facilitated by Johanna and Gavin on behalf of Sonia.

In Attendance: Jason Edworthy (President), Sandy Bell (Past President), Jennifer Dimopoulos (Secretary), Brooke Hartwick (Treasurer), Claire Goddard (Individual), Edna Kaiser (Individual), Cailin Kopetski (Individual), Kate Wood (Individual), Ally Penic (Individual), Louise Caplan (Individual), Alisa Di Benedetto (Individual – departed at 7:00 pm), Johanna Nimchuk (AEF Finance & Support, non-voting), Gavin Pearson (AEF Project & Event Coordinator, non-voting) and Flo Scherpenisse (Recording Secretary, non-voting)

Absent with Regrets: Sonia Dantu (Executive Director, non-voting)

Absent without Regrets: Pat Buffalo (Individual)

Jason also asked the Board about any conflicts of interest with regards to any of the agenda items. None were identified.

**2. Agenda – Motion to approve – February 20, 2025**

With regards to agenda item #3, the correct meeting date of the previous board meeting should be November 14, 2024, not November 5, 2024.

**MOTION: Brooke moved to approve the February 20, 2025 meeting agenda with the above noted amendment. Sandy 2<sup>nd</sup>. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.**

**3. Minutes – Motion to approve – November 14, 2024**

Jason inquired about any corrections to the November 14, 2024 draft meeting minutes.

**MOTION: Claire moved to approve the November 14, 2024 meeting minutes. Brooke 2<sup>nd</sup>. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.**

**4. President's Report**

Jason presented a summary of the President's Report and highlighted the following points:

- Three (3) versions of the AEF Land Acknowledgement have been drafted to recognize local First Nations in the area for AEF meetings/ events that are held in different locations throughout Alberta. A generic, southern AB and northern AB versions of the Land Acknowledgement have been submitted for review.
- Jason participated in Zoom calls with EC (Equestrian Canada) where voting members requested that EC address questions and concerns regarding EC's poor response to member inquiries.
- Jason provided input on the AEF's application to the Public Land Trails Grant Program by the GOA (Government of AB) with regards to funding for the following three (3) components: (i) Equestrian Trail GIS

Mapping and Cataloging; (ii) AEF Public Awareness Outreach Campaign and (iii) a feasibility study regarding the Mesa Butte North Fork Staging Area Safety and Access improvements.

- Jason continued to support Kelsey Noland (Chair of the Recreation TF), introduced her to the Kananaskis Trails Advisory Group (KTAG) and met local outfitters in the Panther Corners area along with member, Bruce Stover.

No additional questions from the floor.

**MOTION: Ally moved to accept the President's Report as verbally presented. Jennifer 2<sup>nd</sup>. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.**

#### 5. Treasurers Report

##### a. Overview of 2024 DRAFT Year End Statements

Brooke presented an overview of the 2024 DRAFT YE statements. The following areas were summarized:

- Biggest item of note was with regards to assets available, specifically, cash at hand. However, it was noted that there has been a considerable drawdown of cash at hand in 2024 as compared to 2023.
- The large variation in unearned membership fees in 2024 as compared with 2023 was largely due to a technical issue with the platform used where AEF had been unable to accept and reconcile the fees received until January. This was reflected in the amount of cash AEF was carrying.
- A decrease in sport and education revenue in 2024 as compared with 2023 was mentioned.
- Overall, revenue differences in 2024 as compared with 2023 was driven by a couple of large grants for athlete development presented to AEF in 2024.
- It is anticipated AEF revenue projection in 2025 would decrease to \$1.5M as compared to \$1.8M in 2024. Moving forward in 2025, AEF's cash at hand needs to be closely monitored to ensure no shortfall by year end.
- Overall, expenses in 2024 remained consistent. A slight increase in salaries was reflected a 3% increment in annual salaries and an overlap of two positions for onboarding and training purposes. This is expected to decrease as there would be no overlap anticipated in 2025.
- For education, there was a 30% decrease from 2023 to 2024, but in 2025, this is anticipated to increase due to changes in the coaching and rider programs.
- Decreases noted in advertising and promotion category, along with office administration costs.
- Increases noted in both sport and trail support categories.
- Rent and meeting expenses remained largely unchanged.
- Decreases noted in cost of goods sold and professional fees. However, in 2025, AEF financials will be audited. Potentially, professional fees would see an increase as a result.

##### b. January 31, 2025, Financial Statements

Brooke also presented a brief summation of the January 31, 2025, Financial Statements by noting the following points:

- In terms of revenue, given that it is only January, AEF has received approximately 65% of its annual budgeted membership renewals. It is anticipated that this would increase as the weather warms up and activity/ events increases. Overall, this metric is consistent with this time last year.
- To date, recreation revenue is ahead of budget with an influx of funds from the recreation program and the Net Trail Supporter Program.
- In 2025, AEF has taken in approximately 1/3 of its anticipated annual revenue comprised primarily of membership fees.
- In terms of expenses, so far, only approximately 2.5% of administrative expenses have been spent primarily in the form of board meetings, website, and hosting platforms.

- Additionally, expenses from recreation, education and sport have been minimal to date. Given that it is early in 2025, this is on par with previous years.
- A similar consideration was noted for Alberta Bits as no issues have been published in 2025.

**MOTION: Ally moved to accept the Treasurers Report as previously circulated and as presented. Kate 2<sup>nd</sup>. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous.**

#### 6. Operations Report

Gavin presented a brief overview of the Operations Report on behalf of Sonia and touched on the following points:

- Association Development core grant funding from Government of Alberta (GOA) in the amount of \$81,700 has not yet been received.
- Update on registration in Active Living programs such as Ride & Drive, Live Outside the Box (LOTB).
- Overall, current membership is slightly lower than 2024 numbers with youth memberships down, but business and club memberships remain unchanged from 2024.
- Of note, the majority of membership revenue was received in January 2025 instead of December 2024 and as such, this was reflected in approximately \$635K in revenue.
- Overall, an increase in business profile interactions and views in Google for January 2025, as compared to January 2024. Also, an increase in views through Facebook was noted over the past three months.
- With regards to Alberta Bits, AEF will be producing three issues per year (instead of four annual issues). The Fall and Winter 2024 editions were only published online due to the Canada Post strike.
- AEF will be working with Odvod Media to refresh the layout of Alberta Bits.
- The final draft of the Master Strategic Communications and Marketing Plan will soon be delivered.
- 2024 Annual Provincial Award winners will be recognized for their outstanding achievements at Stride With Us on April 25, 2025.
- At present, as it is early in the season, there are very few competitions, but more events are anticipated as the weather warms up.
- Karina Fernandes (Sport and Recreation Manager) is chairing the symposium working group for the upcoming 2025 National Coach Developer (CD) Symposium on September 8-12, 2025. In parallel, Sonia will be overseeing leadership meetings with EC and other PTSOs.
- Participation in Learn to Ride programs has reached highest level to date with 206 assessments in 2024.
- The Public Lands Trail Program Grant application has been submitted on December 6, 2024, for the sum of \$105,952 and at present, AEF is waiting for the GOA's decision. The intent of this application would be to fund three projects: (i) GIS mapping and cataloging of equestrian trails in Public Land Use Zones; (ii) Public Awareness Outreach Campaign to promote responsible trail use through various forms of media and (iii) a feasibility study to address safety and access challenges in the Mesa Butte North Fork Staging Area.

Questions from the floor included:

- With regards to AEF working with Odvod Media, were the regular writers and contributors to Alberta Bits aware of this change? No issues are to be expected with this transition.
- What was the locker system for Coach Developers (CD)? The locker system is a database where all CD certification modules are recorded. This correction would indicate active and accurate CD credentials for their qualifications.
- With regards to the 2025 National CD Symposium and PTSO/ EC Leadership Meetings in Calgary, on September 8-12, 2025, will there be volunteer opportunities for the board? Gavin explained that given the many moving parts for this event, as the schedule develops and logistical needs are identified, the board will likely be approached to help out. A suggestion was made to add these key dates to the AEF meeting calendar.

**MOTION: Brooke moved to approve the Operations Report as previously circulated by Sonia and as presented by Gavin.**

**Edna 2<sup>nd</sup>. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.**

7. Business Arising

a. Nominations Committee Recommendation Ratification

On February 11, 2025, the Board of Directors voted electronically on a recommendation put forward by the nominations committee for a list of nominees to stand for election to the board for 2025. This motion is included in the meeting minutes for ratification. Claire advised that initially, the motion failed to include the number of positions to be filled on the AEF board. As such, Claire moved to rescind the initial motion and resubmitted the following amended motion.

**MOTION (Amended): Claire moved that the Nominations Committee recommend the following slate of nominees, Jennifer Dimopoulos, Anne Stone, Kat Swinimer, and Lindsay Seidel-Wassenaar, to stand for election to fill three (3) seats on the 2025 AEF Board, with their names to be presented to the membership for voting.**

**Kate 2<sup>nd</sup>. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (1). Approved.**

**As such, the Board consented to ratify the above noted motion.**

**In favor (9); Against (0); Abstain (1). Approved.**

b. Vision and Mission Statements – Final Review

Jason requested feedback for the next-to-final versions of the AEF vision, mission and five-year goal statements as prepared by Julia Harvie-Schemko (Red Thread Connections Inc.). The following statements were preferred by the Board:

Vision: *“Inclusive community | Thriving together | United by Horses.”*

Mission: *“AEF supports Alberta’s equine community through programs, education, and resources that promote horse welfare, sustainability, and meaningful connections among members.”*

Five-year Goal: *“By 2030, AEF will strengthen its financial foundation by growing revenue streams, increasing membership value, and establishing reserves to support future programs and community initiatives.”*

**ACTION: Jason to discuss the process further with Sonia and the preferred statements to be confirmed by the Board via an electronic vote.**

c. Meet a Horse – Update

Jason presented an update on behalf of Alisa who unexpectedly departed the meeting due to technical issues. It has been recommended that the “Meet a Horse” initiative be retired due to barriers and challenges identified over the past two board meetings. Specifically, challenges such as liability.

Jason opened the floor to further discussion. Louise suggested an alternative to overcome these logistical barriers by partnering with veterinary schools for insurance purposes. Another suggestion made was to talk to 4-H clubs about recruitment. This initiative was to be tabled for future discussion as it was initially included as part of the strategic plan.

d. Land Acknowledgement Statement – Final Review

Jason updated the board with regards to the following amended Land Acknowledgement statements for final approval. Minor edits were made whereby *“traditional”* was amended to *“original”* peoples. Version 1 is intended for general use in ZOOM meetings such as the AGM. For meetings/ events held in a specific locale, more specific versions of the Land Acknowledgement Statement would be used to recognize local nations, treaty areas and

Metis settlements.

**MOTION: Claire motioned to accept the revised Land Acknowledgement document, including version 1 and 2 as published on the AEF Board portal.**

**Louise 2<sup>nd</sup>. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.**

e. Stride With Us and AGM

Gavin provided a brief update of both Stride With Us and the upcoming AGM. With regards to Stride With Us, he highlighted the following points:

- The timing of Stride With Us was changed to coincide with Horse Expo weekend in Red Deer, April 25-27, 2025.
- At this time, registration for award winners and their guests is open with open registration to occur next week.
- Volunteers from the board will be needed to help set up the event, clean up following the event and as greeters. More details to come.

With regards to the AGM, Gavin mentioned the following:

- At this time, electronic voting remains open where all eligible members are encouraged to cast their vote for the 2025 board nominees. Voting will close February 28, 2025.
- The AGM will be held on March 6, 2025, at 6:30 pm via ZOOM and would be approximately thirty minutes in duration. Attendees must register in order to obtain the meeting details to attend.
- Jason encouraged all board members to attend and participate.

f. TOR Updates

Jason explained that typically, Terms of Reference (TORs) apply to all committees and task forces. For committees TORs denote a clear communication path between the board and staff. However, this was noted to not always be the case in task forces (TF), such as awards, scholarships, and recreation TFs. In some cases, where the chair to that TF was not a board member, the communication path between the board, staff and the non-board member chair has been unclear. Miscommunication and confusion related to tasks such as setting meeting agendas, reporting to the board, receiving feedback and the like could potentially lead to misunderstandings and damage working relationships. Likely this needs to be done for each TF. In April 2025, when the new committees are formed for the year, this may be a good time to have all committees review and address this.

**ACTION ITEM: Add TOR review to the April 2025 board meeting agenda.**

8. New Business

a. Reports

On behalf of Sonia, Gavin advised that any reports provided to Sonia need to be submitted a minimum of one week prior to the meeting in order to be uploaded to the board portal for review by board members.

b. Governance Committee

As Chair of the Governance Committee, Kate briefly advised of work being done in the background on the policy regarding conflict of interest. This would be applicable when AEF enters into commercial contracts.

c. Recreation Task Force (RTF)

Louise provided an update on the Recreation Task Force by sharing the following opportunity:

- New leadership opportunity for AEF to manage select trails in the Panthers area by providing trail maintenance and signage. The purpose would be to provide safer and more accessible trails for equestrians.
- The proposed project requires expertise with insurance, Workers Compensation Board (WCB), Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), along with various other contractors. Also, a project trail manager would manage the project.
- In 2025, the objective is to determine government funding for the project.
- At this time, the RTF wanted to gauge the level of interest from the board with regards to this initiative.
- Discussion: It was noted that this project would not only protect access but would also increase operational capacity of AEF. Overall, the board was amenable to this initiative with more details to come.

d. Other: N/a

#### 9. Adjournment

Jason inquired about any final questions or comments. Hearing none, Jason requested a motion to conclude the meeting.

**MOTION: Jennifer moved to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.**

#### ***2025/2026 Board Meeting/Event Dates***

***NOTE: Meetings are subject to change due to inclement weather and/or the urgency of issues. As much notice as possible will be provided.***

March 6, 2025	6:30 pm – 7 pm	AEF AGM, Zoom
April 25, 2025	5 pm – 10 pm	Stride With Us – Red Deer – Red Deer Resort & Casino, Monaco & Venetian
April 26, 2025	9:30 am – 4 pm	Board Meeting – Red Deer, Westerner Park, Viewing Room floor
June 19, 2025	6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Board Meeting, Zoom
September 20, 2025	9:30 am – 4 pm	In Person, Calgary - TBD
November 6, 2025	6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Board Meeting, Zoom
February 19, 2026	6:30 pm – 8:30 pm	Board Meeting, Zoom
March 5, 2026	6:30 pm – 7:30 pm	AEF AGM, Zoom