



**American Racing Pigeon Union, Inc.  
January 29, 2024  
Board Meeting**

Board members present: Robert McKenna, John Hundrup, Gary Heindel, Joyce Stierlin, Ronnie Shumaker, Jeff Life, Dave Wilson, Mary Kraft, Toni Wiaderski, Al Christeleit, Karen Clifton

Board members joined the virtual meeting and were welcomed.

Other guests (members at large) were present: Don Lowe, Ed Daniels, Ronda Mariani, Beverly Gottlieb, Ryan Jones and John Vance.

President McKenna welcomed all participants and noted that Steve Lawler was ill and would not participate and Robbie was taking care of family matters so would miss the meeting.

President McKenna asked participants not to talk over one another as a courtesy to whomever has the floor.

President McKenna asked for approval of the November 2023 annual meeting minutes as posted. CL Gage made motion to approve. Gary Heindel made second. Approved unanimously.

Pacific Mountain Zone Update

Zone Director, Joyce Stierlin, reported that a Zone Meeting was held in Bakersfield. Attendees were mainly California State Racing Pigeon Organization (CSRPO) members, as well as AU members. Joyce said the show was nice and that no concerns were brought up.

Southwest Zone Update

CL Gage, Southwest Zone Director, said he attended a one-loft race at Paul Daniels'. CL said that there was conflict posted on line involving Joe Nemelka and Lisa Schutta. He said it was bull over Daniels' race and hunting on Gary Weir's land. CL said it needs to be taken off Facebook as it is not good. He said it had gotten out of hand but he is trying to control it.

Plains Zone Update

Zone Director, Gary Heindel, said it has been fairly calm in the Plains Zone. He shared that the Fox River Valley Combine is hosting the Midwest race.

Also serving as Awards Chairman, Gary then brought up discussion regarding the AU Registered and Elite Registered Champion awards. Gary said there are a lot of paper applications that are pending. He said he thought we would be ready to go forward for 2024 automated awards for these categories. He said he needed clarification as to if the awards should be based on the automated processing now in development (NDB) or paper submissions. Gary said he was concerned about the security of the NDB.

Joyce Stierlin said the programmer did not doubt the security of the NDB, however, the race secretaries sometimes submit inaccurate race results. She suggested Gary use the old criteria published in the Yearbook and evaluate the paper submissions for 2023.

The paper AU Registered and Elite Registered Champion awards criterion appears in the annual yearbook, which differs from the automated process under development. The programmer is working directly with Jeff Travers who was on the Awards Committee when original criteria for these awards was developed. Karen was directed to watch changes and wait for direction from the Awards Chairman, Gary Heindel, as to when to change criteria for the AU Registered and Elite Registered Champion awards to the new automated process criteria.

#### Southeast Zone Update

Southeast Zone Director, Ronnie Shumaker, said he has been busy assisting clubs. He added that new members have been gained in the Southeast Zone and specifically in Alabama, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

Ronnie shared that a relatively new club in North Carolina would like to host a zone meeting and he will attend and provide updates on AU projects. Robbie Whaley will also attend to present a seminar regarding pigeon health.

Ronnie also said Robbie will attend a zone meeting in Chattanooga.

#### Northeast Zone Update

Toni Wiaderski said he had 10 new members, has coordinated a show and auction and that AI sent him birds so they made a profit.

Toni said a complaint from months ago had been received from a member in his zone and that he has been waiting to hear an outcome. Toni said Karen had not responded.

Karen interjected reminding Toni that the infraction had been sent to appropriate board members (Bob McKenna, Al Christeleit, Robbie Whaley, Jeff Life, Steve Lawler and Toni Wiaderski) on September 29, 2023.

Al said Dave Wilson is working on it. Dave stated it was very confusing and that he had conversation with Steve Lawler regarding by-laws. Dave said the combine does not want to abide by the 2/3 majority vote rule. Dave said he talked to Al and Terry Finnerty.

Al said Terry Finnerty is working on it and that they will have resolution soon.

At this point in the meeting, unidentifiable participants entered and were speaking using graphic religious slurs and other offensive language. These individuals were removed as quickly as possible. Several board members also hung up.

The few that remained discussed coordinating a meeting to conclude meeting business. Karen to coordinate and get meeting information to board members.

Meeting ended 7:42 p.m.

### **Continuation of meeting occurred on February 4, 2024.**

Board members in attendance: Bob McKenna, John Hundrup, Ronnie Shumaker, Gary Heindel, Jeff Life Dave Wilson, Al Christeleit, CL Gage, Karen Clifton, Mary Kraft, Toni Wiaderski

AU members attending: Paul Kaufman, Don Lowe, Drew Lesofski, Beverly Gottlieb, John Vance

President McKenna called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m. Bob asked non-board members to mute while business is being conducted and noted they would be welcome to speak at the end of the meeting.

Bob recapped the first portion of the meeting, which was held on January 29, 2024. Various Zone Director reports were given during that meeting.

#### Lakes Zone Update

Dave Wilson, Lakes Zone Director, said that there have been good pigeon shows and clubs are getting together and selling bands for different races. He mentioned it is breeding season and clubs are really enjoying getting together.

#### Northwest Zone Update

Zone Director, Jeff Life, said it has been quiet in the Northwest Zone. Jeff also shared that he has attended three zone meetings recently. He said there would not be other shows coming up and people will start focusing on old birds.

#### Promotion Update (Mary Kraft and Al Christeleit)

Mary reported she has sent out materials to a few groups recently that are interested in starting 4-H groups, as well as responding to members' requests for posting and publicizing their events on social media.

Al said he has been working on the second website and thinks people will be happy with the outcome. Dave Wilson indicated he had talked to Terry Finnerty and was told that the model site may be posted and up this evening. He thinks clubs will like it.

President McKenna asked if it was going to be separate from the AU site or linked to it. Dave said it would not be linked to the existing site and explained they have a model to work with.

Al said it will be good and that it is step one and will be unique.

With regard to promotion, Ronnie said that the banners had been ordered and four have been shipped. The motion approved during the previous meetings was to order ten banners. The purchase was approved. He said that the banners cost approximately \$40 and shipping is between \$15 and \$18. He said four were spoken for and have been shipped.

Member Paul Kaufman asked what was involved with the banners and Ronnie explained they are for clubs that request them that will use them for promotion. Al told Paul that he had ordered one for Paul to display.

Bob McKenna asked if there was a price break if more are ordered. Ronnie said he did not think they would be any cheaper.

#### Diversity Committee

Committee chair, Ronnie Shumaker, reported that he would like to see a list of people on our website that would be willing to translate. Ideally, he said they would be in different zones and time zones that speak different languages. He suggested a list could be sent to secretaries to let members know the assistance is available to them.

#### Executive Vice President

Al said he sent out paperwork regarding the Whitmers and the audit and position of treasurer. Bob McKenna asked about infractions. Al said he and Dave have been working with complaints on the phone and that he needs to send out letters advising of outcomes.

Dave said Terry is going to the combine in May to try to mediate and that their charter may have to be pulled for non-compliance.

Joyce asked about the letters to parties involved. Karen said she was happy to draft letters for Al advising of the board's action. Joyce said she would like to see a copy of the letters before they are sent so the entire board is aware. Al said he would do that.

Bob McKenna asked CL, convention chair, if he was aware that the IF and AU conventions are being held the same weekend in Florida this year and that he just found out about the date conflict. CL said he had just learned about it as well and asked what we are supposed to do about it. Bob said he just was making CL aware if he didn't already know.

Al talked about over-lapping the races and combining them for an overall winner. He said the AU use to give trophies to the overall winner and should do that again. Bob

asked Karen if the AU provided trophies. Karen said the convention host provides trophies sometimes but not the AU.

CL talked about bull riding in Texas and that they put up an entry fee and that is the pot prizes are from. He said PETA showed up with county officials. Those officials said they were not interested in pigeons. CL said that PETA threatened the convention hotel and manager. CL said he told the hotel manager to throw PETA out and went on to say that PETA will go away if you push back and that they have no teeth.

CL also said that a one-loft race is causing problems. He said Lisa Schutta was causing problems because of the one-loft. He added that the AU should not get involved with one-loft races. Bob McKenna agreed.

Prior to the meeting, Pacific Mountain Zone Director, Joyce Stierlin, asked to submit two motions prior to voting. Bob McKenna asked her to present those motions.

Joyce moved that all board votes be recorded in the minutes with a last name (alpha order) roll call of the board members present, indicating how they voted (yes, no, abstain). If all board members vote yes or all board members vote no, a simple statement to that effect replaces the roll call list in the minutes.

Joyce made a motion to accept. Dave Wilson made the second. Gary Heindel said the motion should be amended. Joyce reiterated that an overall vote would be asked for and if unanimous to approve or disapprove, then a simple statement explaining unanimous vote be recorded in the minutes. Otherwise, she would like each board member (alpha order) to be listed with their vote of approval or disapproval. Bob asked for the vote to approve: Christeleit - yes; Gage - yes; Heindel-yes; Hundrup - yes; Life - yes; Shumaker - yes; Steirlin - yes; Wiaderski - yes; Wilson - yes. Unanimous.

Joyce moved that all Board Action Requests (BARs) be presented by the zone director as in the past but the motion to approve is recorded in the minutes with the BAR submitter's name and requested action (third section of the BAR).

Dave Wilson asked what would be different in what is done now versus the proposed change. Joyce explained that the directors' names are listed appearing to have made the motion, when it is the members submitting BARs are making the motions. President McKenna called for the vote: Christeleit - yes; Gage - yes; Heindel - yes; Hundrup - yes; Life - yes; Shumaker - yes; Steirling - yes; Wiaderski - yes; Wilson - yes. Unanimous.

Al said he wanted the board members to state that they should be held to the same standards that the AU holds members to. CL said he agreed. Jeff Life asked if there is something lacking. Al said, no but for future it should be on record. Jeff asked if this presents a change in the Constitution & By-Laws. Al said no. Jeff said it would have to be added. Al asked what the problem is.

Joyce asked Al for clarity as to where he wanted to see this posted. She asked if he wanted to see it as a resolution. Al made the motion. CL made the second. Bob called for the vote: Christeleit - yes; Gage - yes; Heindel - yes; Hundrup - yes; Life - yes; Shumaker - yes; Steirling - yes; Wiaderski - yes; Wilson - yes. Unanimous.

Al then said he hired auditors and said the AU books are screwed up and they can't audit. Al said he shared the transcribed conversation between Butch Shoop and the CPA. He said the AU needs a treasurer and Butch would serve as a temporary treasurer and that the AU should change bookkeepers every few years.

Joanie read previous minutes and treasurer's reports dating back to 2008. She said a treasurer was to be reinstated but was not in official minutes and she didn't find anything in minutes. She asked if Austin is to reconcile with entries. Joanie said in her opinion, this should not be Karen's responsibility. Al added that he agreed it should not be Karen's responsibility and that she is not at fault.

Karen then asked if in addition to having a treasurer and new CPA, if the board would agree to include proper training for AU staff. Al agreed and then asked Mary if she had a lot of Quick Books knowledge. Mary explained she had not but has worked many payroll systems and is not afraid to jump in and learn. Mary has been finding what are simply data entry and coding errors and correcting them.

CL asked if Butch is willing to be treasurer.

Al asked Bob if he talked to Al's auditors. Bob said he had and they told him they didn't think there was wrong doing, however, recommended hiring a new bookkeeper. They offered to provide that service for about \$500 per month and said they saw no improper activity.

Ronnie Shumaker asked for proper quotes from different firms.

Dave Wilson said if we keep putting more on staff, they will be pulled away from numerous other functions they are responsible for.

Joyce asked if a new bookkeeper could be hired for \$500 a month. Joanie said if it adds 15 minutes of extra work a day, the staff should retrain. If more than 15 minutes, a new bookkeeper should be hired.

Dave asked Karen how much time she spends on accounting. Karen said at some times during the year, it might be 2 or 3 hours a day. She said that during the months of February through June or July, it takes 4 or more hours a day for each of the staff members. Karen said she would be grateful for a full time bookkeeper.

CL asked if our bookkeeper is a CPA. Karen said he is. Al was asked if his CPA could do the same service for \$500 a month. Joanie said the volume in the AU office necessitates a monthly bookkeeper to oversee.

Al said a treasurer is needed. CL said if the current CPA is not advising, then he needs to be replaced.

Dave mentioned \$30,000 discrepancy. Karen said it was not a matter of missing funds rather the current CPA making entries to balance. Mary repeated that it is due to coding errors and data entry, which is being cleaned up.

Dave said that he appreciated Ronnie's suggestion to get quotes from different CPAs, however, if we take time to do that then there is a delay and if we want to start fresh, now is the time since it is just February.

CL made the motion to have Butch serve as treasurer, hire a new bookkeeper for \$400, \$500 or whatever a month and retrain staff. Al seconded.

Ronnie said he understood Dave's concern about a delay, but thinks the motion should be specific in terms of money allocated for a bookkeeper. CL then said he would change the motion to \$300 - \$750 a month.

McKenna asked if training will cost more. CL said Butch will train staff on Quick Books and work with Al's CPAs. McKenna called for the vote: Christeleit - yes; Gage - yes; Heindel - yes; Hundrup - yes; Life - yes, Shumaker - yes, Steirling - yes; Wiaderski - yes; Wilson - yes.

Al said he would call his CPA, Butch and the current bookkeeper.

#### Review of Board Action Requests

PAC MTN-063 Trina DeWitt – moves that 110.02 allows a concourse to be created by clubs or combines with a distance of more than 50 miles. Discussion ensued regarding change to race rules and setting up dummy combines. One suggestion was to have sections available to separate if they want to but still fly with the concourse. Trina DeWitt – motion. Failed for lack of second.

PLAINS-056 Don Lowe – moves that the wording in race rule 7.10 be changed from born to banded. Don offered that in a Facebook post on John Vance's American Racing Pigeon Union Accountability Group, John Vance implies banding birds born prior to the New Year lacks sportsmanship, ethics and integrity. John suggested Don submit a BAR to improve the AU. Don Lowe – motion. CL – second. Bob called for a vote: Christeleit – yes; Gage – yes; Heindel – yes; Hundrup – yes; Life – yes; Shumaker – yes; Stierlin – yes; Wiaderski – yes; Wilson – yes.

NW-202 Jeff Life – moves to add a new rule for OPEN races, to allow supervised transfer of birds into a second clubs transporter. Promoting long distance open style racing was discussed. A single club competing in long distance opens would assist with expenses and time to destination. Jeff Life – motion. Joyce Stierlin – second.

President McKenna called for the vote: Christeleit – yes; Gage – yes; Heindel – yes; Hundrup – yes; Life – yes; Shumker – yes; Stierlin – yes; Widerski – yes; Wilson – yes.

PAC MTN-064 Martha Stork makes the motion that she be refunded \$100 for filing fees for two infractions since they were not pursued. A check was mailed to Martha a couple of days before receiving this BAR so was resolved.

PAC MTN-064 Martha Stork moves that the AU respond to concerns in a timely manner (24 hours) with some type of response. The fact that 24 hours may not be enough time to respond during the exceptionally busy seasons, i.e., band distribution, receiving band orders/rosters, etc. was discussed. Joyce Stierlin will contact her for more specificity.

SE-052 Beverly Gottlieb moves that the time out for darkness be figured as per her recommendation. Failed for lack of second.

President McKenna suggested executive session to discuss infractions and that Al wanted to discuss the Whitmers. John Hundrup agreed it should be in executive session. Al Christeleit said that it should be put to bed. John Hundrup asked to have discussion and not have something pushed at the last minute without time to review and discuss.

CL encouraged getting a vote.

Jeff Life said he was fine with discussing but can't vote without knowledge. Dave Wilson said John Vance conducted a review. John Vance said he understands a lot of the current board is not aware of the things leading up to the disciplinary action but said he felt they should not have been expelled. Dave said they have been punished and should be voted back in.

Bob suggested the board go into executive session. Al said he has 4 inches of paperwork and that the board should just vote.

Gary Heindel said he was not on the board at the time of the case and so is not comfortable voting on it.

It was also stated that John Vance was likely not impartial because he has previously publicly announced his opinion on social media.

CL interjected that it was his birthday and was leaving the meeting and that the next time the board would see him would be in Oklahoma City for depositions. He then left the meeting.

Dave Wilson asked why they were expelled. Joyce indicated she would not further discuss outside of executive session or the board would be violating rules.

It was decided that the board would reconvene to discuss further in executive session.



Bob McKenna asked members participating in the call if they had questions or comments. Member, Don Lowe, asked about the banners that were discussed earlier. He asked if they were for sale or lease.

Ronnie Shumaker explained they were for clubs that were actively promoting. He explained there were 10 banners purchased. Ronnie said 4 have been requested by clubs actively recruiting and promoting.

Member, Paul Kaufman, asked what the banners were for. Al told him that he already arranged with Ronnie to have a banner sent to Paul to put up in his sporting goods store.

Then Paul commented that he wasn't familiar with the two former members but felt that if they have been out since 2016, that was long enough.

John Vance said he looked at the by-laws and it does not say he is not qualified to be an investigator, repeated the drug addiction issues and said the board is out of their world. He said one of them did not receive paperwork so let him back in.

Member, Drew Lesofski, noted that there is so much misinformation on social media that it is confusing to members. He asked what financial safeguards are in place, how many CPA's already look at AU books and who does the tax returns. It was explained that the AU does have safeguards in place, we have two CPA's that review AU books. One does the monthly bookkeeping and the other does the annual review and tax returns. This practice has been in place for 20 years. Monthly reports are also sent to the President, Executive Vice President and Vice President every month.

Drew suggested that information be shared in upcoming newsletters to educate members.

Drew also asked about the process when hiring contractors to avoid nepotism. He mentioned that a lot of friends are being appointed now but wanted to know about equal opportunity for other members. He suggested this also be shared in the next newsletter for members' benefit. He said he would be happy to draft a policy for the board if they would like his assistance.

Gary Heindel noted he was not comfortable continuing with executive session tonight without a chance to review paperwork.

Ronnie offered an apology to the board and said he meant to bring up a Board Action Request for approval of a new open race (Deep South Open). He also said he didn't feel we should continue after 3 hours. He said he didn't want to see tempers flare leading to more division.

Bob suggested another meeting for executive session with Greg Smith. Al suggested Zoom or a conference call with Greg present to vote. It was agreed to check with Greg to determine his availability.

Ronnie made the motion to adjourn. Joyce Stierlin – second. Unanimous.