

October 2014

# Meeting Minutes, October 2014

National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors

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## Recommended Citation

National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors, "Meeting Minutes, October 2014" (2014). *National Smokejumper Association Meeting Minutes*. 55.

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**NSA board of directors meeting  
October 8-9, 2014  
Residence Inn by Marriott-Seattle South/Tukwila, WA**

**October 8, 2014**

- **Call to order, introduction to site, introductions, approval of the agenda – Cherry**

- **Approval of previous meeting minutes – Boatner**

We had a brief discussion of last meeting's minutes and they were approved. Tom will review last meeting's notes as we go through this meeting and make sure everything we agreed to take action on at the last meeting have been addressed.

- **Website Committee report – Lufkin**

Larry passed out information on expenses associated with web site work. Our site was hacked a few years ago leading to the site being shut down and formation of a committee to deal with web site development. Larry has been the main contact with our webmaster, Jon Robinson, and they have had extensive conversations on how to deal with web site issues and Larry has learned "a ton." They split the website in to 3 main areas: smokejumper.com (the old site), trails, and history/gallery. The board gave approval for \$2,000 initially and has approved additional funding as needed. Using "sprints," periodic upgrades and updates are accomplished. Sprints are short lists of like tasks accomplished concurrently. Total costs in the past 2 years are \$7600. A pdf of all known smj pilots has been added recently. The next sprint is being planned. The next big challenge will be developing the history/gallery site. John McDaniel has had some complaints about the challenges of the membership portion of the website, in particular the credit card payment area, and he requested that Larry and Jon take a look at possibilities for simplification. This seems to be mostly about the need for a password. That ends up confusing users. Larry estimates annual maintenance costs at around \$2,000. This estimate does not include additional upgrades.

Fred Cooper expressed concern at the overall costs of the website and this led to discussion on html versus off the shelf web site design and maintenance, and the reasons why we have continued with an html site. We also discussed using a professional web designer versus one of us trying to figure it out. The consensus is that it makes a lot of sense for us to use a professional. In terms of succession, Larry says that Jon has a chain of contacts through his own work and if and when he no longer wants to work for us, we will ask him for recommendations on transitioning to another person or business to manage our website.

Jim Cherry commended Larry and Jon for their hard work and dedication. He also commented on our periodic requirement to reach outside our immediate Board for specific expertise that we need, like website support and accounting.

- **Scholarship Committee report – Baker**

We started 4 years ago giving 4 \$2000 scholarships. Our cumulative payout on scholarships at this point is close to \$20,000. Currently, we are giving 3 \$1000 scholarships plus 3 retired smjs have established scholarships. That is a total of 6 scholarships this year, 4 for \$1,000, 1 for \$500, and 1 for \$250. We had only 7 applicants. Awards were made to a smj from Grangeville for pilot school, the daughter of the RAC Loft Foreman for college, the daughter of a 1986 MSO jumper for college, a RDD jumper, graduate of Stanford, for 2<sup>nd</sup> year of medical school, an MSO

jumper for graduate forestry school at the U of Montana, an MSO jumper for the 4<sup>th</sup> year of medical school.

**Should we encourage recipients to become members? We agreed to include a year of free membership to each recipient to encourage future membership. Can people reapply for scholarships if they have already received one? Motion made and passed, that these changes be made. Previous recipients can reapply. We also need to specify that current and former smjs, smj pilots, spouses, and their children and grandchildren are eligible. We will also add certificate to college degree to clarify that we will support a variety of educational endeavors.**

- **Good Samaritan Fund report – Overby**

This fund was originally set up in 2009. The current balance is \$34,041.83. In 2014 to date, we have received \$18,601 and donated \$8,900. Total contributions into the GSF since inception are \$59,234 and total donations disbursed out have been \$24,250. This year's contributions include \$6,000 from the Trails program and \$2500 from Vanguard. There was discussion on whether we should send out a report on GSF activity on an annual basis to contributors, but decided that this information is adequately detailed in the magazine.

- **Investment Committee report – Dayton, Packard, McKean, Baker**

Bob Dayton has recently resigned from the Board for a number of personal reasons. Jim Cherry read Bob's letter explaining the number of difficult issues he is currently dealing with. Jim also read his letter of thanks to Bob for his service. Bob has also been chair of the Investment Committee(IC).

Bob McKean reviewed the NSA Balance Sheet, discussing the particulars regarding moving money out of the First Interstate CD and into Vanguard Mutual Funds. There is concern on the IC with our ownership of individual stocks, which is an uncommon practice for private non-profits of our size. We have made very good returns on these individual stocks, but this has required a lot of expertise and work on John Helmer's part. Based on previous BOD approval, the IC is liquidating these individual stocks over time and shifting them into Vanguard Index Funds. We are consciously moving funds in to lower return options that will require less active management and expertise on our part. There was some discussion and debate on this direction with a couple of members pointing out that this possible decrease in investment return will cause future annual budget shortfalls. The conclusion was that the Vanguard funds represent a better location for our investments over the long-term than individual stocks. With Bob Dayton's loss, the IC would like to add a 4<sup>th</sup> member (doesn't have to be a BOD member) and determine a new chair.

**The BOD requests that the IC proceed with looking for a 4<sup>th</sup> member. John Packer will take over as chair of the IC.**

**Jim will frame and ship a "Never Alone" print to Bob Dayton with our thanks for his service.**

- **Trails Report-Fred Cooper**

We had 19 week long projects adding up to 172 volunteer weeks of boots-on-the-ground work. Last year we had 24 week long projects, so there was a decrease. There were 158 individual volunteers, 130 of them smokejumpers and 25 associates. There were projects in 12 different national forests and 2 national parks in 8 states. There were 11 drive-to projects and 9 hike-in. Eleven projects were primarily focused on facilities work, 9 were focused on trails work. Reimbursement rates for projects are dropping. We ask for \$25 per day per person, but will negotiate down. Available money for trails work is definitely dropping from the agencies and the foundations. We are trying to get a grant from the American Hiking Association.

We may need to buy some bearproof coolers which are much more expensive than normal coolers. John McDaniel brought up an *old* issue with reimbursement of *expenses* on the Monongahela projects. **Issue has been resolved. Fred and Dennis Sims will work on assuring the problem doesn't occur in the future.** Mike asked if there is a standard agreement he can use in negotiating with Forests in New Mexico. **Fred will send out the form and the process that the USFS uses to make payments.** Jim Cherry discussed details of how the Boundary Waters projects work with finances and food. His point was that we need to be open and creative in our approach to future trails work and consider different ways to fund and manage projects. This may even include participants contributing money for food. The bottom line motto of the Trail Committee has been, "We work for food," but we need to be open-minded about the future of this program.

- **Reunion Committee report – Cooper**

The dates are July 17, 18, 19, 2015 in Missoula. Jim Phillips is planning on a 550 jumper attendance with 125 spouses with a registration fee of \$50 for NSA members and \$65 for non-NSA members. This attendance would be a break even number. Lower attendance will incur a cost. No registration fee for spouses. Meal costs are: barbeque is \$20, banquet is \$30, and brunch is \$15. So total costs for an NSA member would be \$115, and for a non-member would be \$130. One hundred dorm rooms are reserved at the U of M for \$30 a night. The Committee has \$1800 left in their advance of funds. They anticipate making another \$5000 request before registration money starts coming in. Doug Houston is organizing a silent auction.

- **Reunion plans for additional history gathering - Fred Cooper**

We have talked about using this opportunity to get more historic interviews done, but nothing is currently planned.

**Should we ask Charlie Palmer if he is interested in helping? Fred and Roger will contact him.**

- **Video interviews of smokejumpers - John Driscoll**

John has completed 23 interviews so far, some focusing on the smj-CIA connection. He wants to do 30 total. John has interviewed some old jumpers who have already been interviewed by Larry Longley, so there has been some duplication of effort. We still don't have an NSA Historian. John doesn't want to take the job.

- **Report on the Evergreen Museum and the Smokejumper display – McKean**

John Marker and Bob McKean made a 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to the Evergreen Museum and met with the curator, Stuart Bailey. Financial ties between the Museum and Evergreen Aviation have been severed, so the museum should remain viable. They have lost 2 aircraft because of Evergreen's bankruptcy, but don't anticipate losing any more. Bob and John asked straight up if there was interest in maintaining the smokejumper exhibit into the future. It is currently in a poor state of repair. The answer from the curator was yes, because of the link between Evergreen's history and smokejumping. John Marker brought up the additional SE Asia link. Stuart agreed to put together a report with some options, but Bob has been unable to get that report or even reestablish contact with Stuart. So we are in limbo and Bob is concerned with the lack of response. He will continue to follow up. The museum itself is impressive, but our history of professional follow-up from the museum staff has been poor.

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- **Recognition of Guy Hurlbutt's service – NSA BOD**  
Members of the BOD expressed their thanks to Guy for his hard work and his savvy legal counsel. We will miss him. "Whatever I have given to NSA pales in comparison to what I got from smokejumping," was Guy's reply. Guy said the "Never Alone" print is hanging in his office. We also discussed Jim Lindell as Guy's replacement. Jim has agreed to serve as our legal counsel.
- **Presentation by Bill Derr, USFS Fire Investigator**  
John Marker has recently been in the hospital for 3 weeks and is at home recovering. John asked Bill to attend this meeting in his stead. Bill talked about the current state of affairs with the USFS and its approach to fighting fires. The ethic of quick, aggressive response to new fire starts has become rare. Bill was called by old friends with concerns about the Station Fire on the Angeles NF. Bill and Troy Kerth did some investigating and found impressive competence at the mid-level fire positions, but lots of issues with higher level line officers and fire staff. Bill and other retirees were dissatisfied with FS performance on the Station Fire and with the post-fire review. Bill described additional work he has done as a retiree on fire issues in the FS including a paper delivered at the 2011 Aerial Firefighting Conference, and on reviewing escaped fires in New Mexico in 2012. Bill feels that the USFS needs to get back to basics like aggressive initial attack of all unplanned ignitions, the 10 am rule, and increased logging, and better decision-making to address when and where to attack fires. What do we do to address this issue? A good start would be a white paper addressing the current health of the National Forest System and whether current fire management is contributing to a decrease in forest health. Bill shared 3 documents relating to these issues.
- **Introduction and approval of Jim Lindell to serve as NSA's legal counsel – NSA BOD**  
Jim Cherry read about Jim's background from his law firm's website. Guy Hurlbutt also recommends him highly.  
Motion made and passed that we accept Jim Lindell as our legal counsel. Guy suggested that we invite him to our next BOD meeting. Jim Cherry will do that.
- **Budget Report – Brent**  
Brent walked us through the Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss. He also showed us the new breakdown, Profit & Loss by Fund, the 5 funds being Good Samaritan, Scholarships, Trails, Life Members and Unclassified. The four classified funds include only information related to each specific fund. The fifth fund, "Unclassified," represents our annual operations income and expense and includes annual information for the magazine, website, membership and other routine functions. We now need to develop a proposed agenda. The finance/investment committee will be doing the budgeting. All of our prior financial info will be sent to Bob McKean, John Packard, et al, so they can develop 2015 and 2016 budgets. Brent's finance report and our 2014 budget info will be sent to that committee.

We talked about shifting some money out of the 2 CDs that total roughly \$366,000 into the Vanguard Money Market or Index Funds. Our net worth is currently around \$750,000. **We need to have some discussions on planning for the future, i.e., a strategic plan. What do we want to plan for or do in the future as an organization? We've talked about preparing a brochure outlining planned giving options, but it is not completed yet. Jim referred us back to**

**our Mission Statement as a guide. That Mission Statement is 5 or 6 years old and it can be revisited and/or reconsidered. We also need to consider succession on the BOD. We all agreed that these issues need further discussion at future meetings.**

- **Membership Report – McDaniel**

We've reached 300 Life Members. We're close to 1700 total members. We're striving to get more people to sign up for 10 year memberships. We had some general discussion on membership.

- **Merchandise Report – Sheley**

Merchandise emphasis is currently on reunion items-t-shirt, challenge coins, glasses, caps. Chuck has a ton of stuff in his house for the reunion. Sales of reunion items have been good. Chuck talked about some current books about smokejumping that aren't historically accurate, specifically a couple of recent books about the Triple Nickles that credit them with equipment and technical development that they weren't really responsible for. They jumped 32 fires over a 4 month period in 1945. Chuck is using primary sources in the newsletter and is concerned that inaccuracies are becoming accepted fact that overstate the Triple Nickles historic contribution to smokejumping and undersell the contributions of the Conscientious Objectors and early parachute pioneers like the Derry Brothers.

- **Details of Mark Urban's death – Boatner**

Tom explained the deployment of the drogue parachute in the ram-air system, the use of automatic activation devices(AADs), and BLM's testing of a 2<sup>nd</sup> potential AAD to use operationally. This required long drogue ride test jumps in order to gather accurate data for programming the new AAD. It was during this set of test jumps that Mark Urban experienced his fatal jump.

- **Request for report from USFS re: parachute policy - (referring to questions raised in previous Smokejumper magazine President's article) – Cherry**

Jim read his editorial from the last Smokejumper Magazine about ram airs and rounds and the questions he poses. We had an extended conversation about our responsibilities and rights as a BOD to ask these questions to the decision makers and the possible consequences to us as an organization. We agreed after much discussion and debate to revisit this issue in the morning and decide what action we would take regarding this issue and Jim's set of questions.

### **October 9, 2014**

- **New business**

Historic jump information-master actions, jump logs, spotter requests-Roger Savage

Roger has been working on ways to record and access historic records from the jump bases so former jumpers have access to their own records. Roger and Guy have explored whether there are any legal issues, such as privacy concerns. They don't think there are, so they may be able to post a Google site that provides access to Missoula's records. There is a fair amount of variation in the quality of the records depending on how well info was initially recorded, but as historical records they are valuable and providing access to our members is a great move. If this works out, we will explore doing it with records from other bases.

- **Revisit of parachute system questions-BOD**

Jim has summarized his questions and put them forward for discussion. We had more discussion on what questions to ask, how to ask them, and what info a cover letter should contain. There was a consensus that Jim's 8 questions should be forwarded to Tim DeHaas. **Jim will draft a letter with the intro and questions for the Executive Committee to consider and finalize.**

**Fund Raising ideas – Overby**

-Are we keeping track of who is making donations, how much, how often? Should we send them periodic updates on what the GSF has done? Lively conversation on whether we want to take on this workload, whether it is a worthwhile thing to pursue. General info on GSF donations and disbursements is listed in each issue of the magazine.

-Consider a raffle to be conducted at the 2015 National Reunion as a fundraiser for the GSF. Mike would handle the details of organizing and conducting this along with anyone who wants to help him. Mike handed out his plan to raffle a 5 day/4 night horseback/fishing trip into the Bob Marshall Wilderness and his detailed plans for promoting sales. A number of people expressed concern about various laws from state to state and tax implications for the eventual winner. State non-profit associations may be able to provide answers.

**Mike is willing to give it a try and is aware of the potential pitfalls, and he will continue working on it.**

- **Fire Starters by Tom Decker – Jim Cherry**

Tom, former IDC jumper and retired military chaplain, has put together some writings that he is calling Fire Starters. The little pieces are devotionals that are smokejumper-oriented, but can appeal to wider audiences. Jim read 3 to the BOD.

- **Next meeting(s)– discussion on location and timing in view of the 2015 reunion in Missoula**

The possibility has been raised that we skip our normal March meeting in Boise and plan our next BOD meeting to be in Missoula in conjunction with the reunion.

**Travel to Missoula on July 15<sup>th</sup>, meet all day the 16<sup>th</sup>, and half of the 17<sup>th</sup>. NSA Board members would be available at the end of the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> to help with reunion set-up work. Chuck will work on a meeting location. Everyone will handle their own hotel arrangements. We could meet in Boise in March, 2016 to get back on our normal schedule. This plan was agreed to.**

- **Evaluation of meeting and travel/lodging vouchers**

This facility works well for our meetings. We will consider having a social again for local smjs when we meet here again. Keep looking for opportunities for outside speakers and points-of-view.

**Tom will bring 15 copies of any reports and the agenda to hand out at the Missoula meeting so there are handouts available for key items; items like agenda, trails report, reunion report, financials. Agenda item for July's meeting-consider the need for forming a succession committee to find candidates for the Board into the future.**

**In attendance:** Jim Cherry, John McDaniel, Chuck Sheley, Guy Hurlbutt, Charlotte Larson, Roger Savage, Gary Baker, Mike Overby, John Packard, Bob McKean, Fred Cooper, Larry Lufkin, Tony Peiffer, Bill Derr, Rich Grandalski, Dave Viale, Brent Russ