

October 2012

# Meeting Minutes, October 2012

National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors

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**Meeting location:  
International Academy of Design & Technology  
645 Andover Park West  
Seattle, WA.**

- **Orientation to facility/introductions/approval of agenda – Jim Cherry**

Additions to the agenda will be added to the second day's business.

New Business – **set up a task force to evaluate the workload of the editor and merchandise manager, website and data base updates, reunion mailings, other mailings and thank you letters for all NSA donations. Task Force: John Marker, Leo Cromwell, Larry Lufkin, Jim Cherry**

- **Minutes of prior meeting and email votes – Tom Boatner**

Deferred until tomorrow.

- **By-law update – Guy Hurlbutt**

Guy gave a summary of changes in the by-laws and the reasons for doing them. It is to change from a set of rules that requires a member driven organization to a Board of Directors driven organization. This is to reflect the reality of how the NSA is operating. **There was some discussion of our need for a Montana resident to act as our legal representative since the NSA is registered there. Bob Dayton will follow up on this requirement.** The Articles of Organization are registered with the Montana Secretary of State. The new by-laws were adopted unanimously. The originals were signed by Cherry.

- **Database report – Roger Savage**

There are 6053 names in our database broken down as follows:

5828 total smokejumpers

1398 NSA members-	24% of all jumpers	(the A list)
1703 nonmembers with addresses	29% of all jumpers	(the B list)
1836 nonmembers without addresses	32%	(the C list)
884 deceased	16%	
123 associate members		
96 pilots		

There are some inaccuracies, especially in keeping up with the names of those who have passed on. For instance, there are 176 Triple Nickel names in the data base, but only 6 listed as deceased. This is certainly very low. We need to continue efforts to improve data, specifically the total number of jumps and fires by base. We need volunteers to collect and computerize this data. There has been a huge amount of work done by Roger Savage, Leo Cromwell, Larry Lufkin, Chuck Sheley and others and it has been a monumental task. The database has been used to encourage new membership and notify members and nonmembers with known addresses of reunions. This has been done a number of times by Sheley, McDaniel and others with limited results. Chuck made 17,000 mailings one year and got 9 new members out of it. Chuck has had better luck finding C listers via orders on the website. Should we send an electronic or hard copy of magazine to B list smokejumpers? **Mike Overby will send an electronic PDF of magazine to B list jumpers to see if it encourages any new membership.** John, Chuck, Larry Lufkin and Roger all have access to data base and can change it. Roger suggests only 1 person have authority to change basic info, that being the data base manager. Roger can send R-1 and R-3 jump records to people who jumped there before 1972.

- **Membership report – John McDaniel**

John reports that overall membership numbers are remaining fairly static. He has non-renewals every quarter. Out of 30 total rookie smokejumpers offered a year of free membership last year, only 2 filled out the application and took advantage of that offer.

- **Report on the NSA Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership award – Guy Hurlbutt**

Last year was the first year of this award and it was very successful. There were 20 applications from the smokejumper community and the decision was made to make 2 awards, 1 to a USFS jumper, and 1 to a BLM jumper. The committee making the selections was made up of the NSA's Guy Hurlbutt, Alaska Base Manager Bill Cramer, and Redmond Base Manager, Bill Selby. Mary Dunton, Al's widow, attended both award presentations, in Fairbanks to Gary Baumgartner, and in McCall to Frankie Romero. NSA would like to continue making this annual award in conjunction with the Smokejumper Base Managers. The motion was made and passed to do that. **Tom Boatner will call Bill Cramer to coordinate.**

- **Update on FS Fire Program – John Marker**

John Marker distributed the 2010 National Association of Forest Service Retirees Fire Committee report entitled, "National Forest Fire Protection and Use." John thinks the NSA should take more of an interest in the political side of the smokejumper program. There are no national mentors for the program in either agency. The NSA should be aware of both opportunities and threats for the smokejumper programs.

- **Website Committee report – Mike Overby**

Report on activities and decisions made by the committee:

- Keep current site as home site without major changes, continue to use John Robinson as webmaster

- Start development on History site-access to photos, videos, stories by decade

- Trails site- implement on-line registration, plus post other program info

The History and Trail sites are currently being developed and will be added over this winter.

- Survey results-make some new enhancements based on survey results

Website stats: We average about 150 visits a day. Each visit looks at an average of 3.69 pages and lasts 2.03 minutes.

- **Website minority report – Chuck Sheley**

Chuck presented a 3 phase plan that he thinks is necessary for deciding systematically what we want in our website and how we get there.

Phase 1: create a web development Specification Document-consider this the blueprint (\$2-3000 estimated for John R. to do this)

Phase 2: develop a web design-consider this a mock-up or clay model

Phase 3: Build/remodel the site-actions will be determined by design developed in Phase 1 and Phase 2

Do we have a list of what we want on our website and how it should be organized?

Board had a long discussion about the website, its history, and how to handle the future. Should we have the website committee implement its various ideas, fall back and implement Chuck's phased plan, or do both concurrently?

**The motion was made and passed that we proceed with Chuck's proposal for Phase 1, up to \$3000 to John Robinson, plus continue with current website committee efforts, i.e. history and trails sites and learning more about Word Press. The website committee will work with John R. to develop a basic list of requirements for the website**

A motion was made to delay Phase 1 until the history and trails link are up and running and we know more about Word Press. This motion was defeated.

- Historical preservation activity & face book updating – Larry Longley**  
 A Face book site using the NSA logo is not our site. That site is overriding our site. How do we fix that? **Bob Dayton will pursue finding who the administrator is for the other site and getting it removed from FB.**  
 Larry handed out a list of people interviewed over the years for the smokejumper oral history project. Early interviews are audio, most of them, though, include video. They are archived at the University of Montana’s Mansfield Library. A small number of these interviews are available online. Some are also available on the Idaho State Historical site.  
**A motion was made and passed to increase our yearly payment to the UM Mansfield Library from \$200 to \$300. This motion passed unanimously.**
- Trail report – Fred Cooper**  
 Fred distributed a Trails report detailing 2012 accomplishments as well as other key points regarding current status and issues for the future for the trails program. This year, 22 projects were done in 9 states using 141 different jumper volunteers and 32 different associate volunteers. The value of this volunteer labor is estimated at \$276,382. The leadership team has really worked hard and is using a self-directed team management model. Associate members Tom Blunn and Ron Larsen have helped tremendously. Next year’s Missoula reunion will dovetail with the main week of trails projects.
- Scholarship Committee report – Larry Lufkin**  
 Doc Smith, Gary Baker, and Larry Lufkin are the scholarship committee. There were six applicants this year for our 3 scholarships. There was a clear top candidate and 3 evenly rated (all current jumpers). The committee referred back to the BOD a request to give 4 scholarships of \$1000 and that was agreed to and done. The money came from the Jukkala/McBride Scholarship Fund. The BOD agreed that it will not be necessary to be a current NSA member to apply and qualify for the scholarships.  
**A motion was made and passed to double the scholarship amount to \$2000 for 3 scholarships.**
- Jumper pilot history - Charlotte Larson**  
 There are 300 pilot names on the current data base put together by Ron. Charlotte is working on getting more complete info on the historical roster of jumper pilots, bases, and years (both agency employed and contract).
- Missoula Jumper Reunion planning for 2013 – Fred Cooper**  
 The reunion is planned for July 12-13, 2013 in Missoula just before the main week of trails projects. Based on responses from the web survey, they are looking for a venue for about 100 people. There will be a possible first ever trails project afterward in Yellowstone National Park, as well as the other scheduled trails projects.
- Magazine and merchandising report – Chuck Sheley**  
 Chuck is trying to make each issue a 48 page issue. Based on printing costs, this gives the most bang for buck. He has lots of content coming in, enough currently to fill the next 3 issues. The “Touching all bases” column will be in the April issue. This column has been hard to keep going for Chuck because of all the coordination work with the 9 bases and difficulty maintaining their interest and meeting his deadlines. The newsletter is available electronically and about 30 members so far have chosen to receive it in that format, saving NSA printing and mailing costs. Merchandising cleared about \$2000 so far this year. There is a lot of work for the amount of money made in merchandising.
- Report on feasibility of paid Executive Director for NSA – Mike Overby**  
 Mike did Internet research, interviewed other small 501-C3 executive directors, previous NSA consideration of this idea , and cost of overhead/operations for similar type organizations. The Wildland

Firefighter Foundation had \$510,000 of income this year, \$220,000 from direct contributions. Their 52 club brought in \$135,000. They have 3 full time paid staff. The Irving (TX) Fire Foundation gave away 10 \$2500 scholarships. They hired a full time person for fund raising. Mike researched additional info on the effectiveness of types of fundraising: major donors, special events, direct mail, online donations, planned gifts rank as the most effective types. A paid executive director will have a major focus on fund raising and a planned giving program. Preliminary recommendation: hire a full or part-time executive director with a base salary of 40-50,000, bonus based on fundraising, with at least 50% of time dedicated to fundraising. It costs \$.35 to raise \$1.00 in revenues. Use Guy's job description as a starting point. Compile a list of desired background and skills for this person to have. Possible fund-raising activities: Grant writing, local jumper base-city special events, more email/direct mail targeting, joint programs with other non-profits. Next Steps: Finalize job description before next board meeting and develop a list of pros and cons, and options; present specific options with estimated cost and revenue of each.

There followed a discussion about our need for an executive director or another type of paid position, our need for more money, uses for more money, key programs of NSA to sustain. Most felt we shouldn't focus so much on fund-raising duties, but rather on our overall need of a paid position to help run the outfit. Further discussion deferred until tomorrow.

- **Treasurer report and report from Brent Russ – Bob Dayton**

Thanks again to Charlie Brown for all his work. Brent says in his experience, this is a unique BOD because of the amount of active work the BOD does. The balance sheet shows \$646,000 in assets. Our only liability would be refunds of prepaid memberships if NSA folded, estimated currently at \$60,000. That leaves us a current equity of roughly \$586,000. This year we've collected \$34,000 in membership income, \$17,000 in donations plus a \$125,000 bequeath.

Brent discussed and reviewed IRS Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax with the BOD. Brett's advice is that we draft and discuss a conflict of interest policy.

- **Financial report re: investment policy – Finance Committee**

The BOD has read the final draft of the investment policy. Eventually, all assets will be covered by this policy. It will take some time to transition current investments into line with the new policy. The Investment Committee consists of Helmer, Dayton and Packard. The plan is to draft a Request for Proposal (RFP) to and find investment manager.

The Internal Rate of Return on amount invested by John Helmer from June, 2004 to Oct, 2012 has been 7.80%. This is higher than many mutual funds over the same period (4 to 6% range) and the S & P 500 Index (5.7%).

### October 4<sup>th</sup> Second day of meeting

- **Clean up any issues not resolved during the prior day's meeting**

Notes from last meeting, March, 2012, Tucson, AZ were unanimously approved.

The BOD continued the discussion on the recent e-mail vote to approve the investment policy and reject the investment with the Montana Community Foundation. Jim Cherry had more info on types of investments with the MCF, and their financial and tax implications. Based on his new info, Jim made a motion that the NSA BOD authorize establishment of a donor directed endowment with MCF by seeking a minimum of \$25,000 in new money from potential donors specifically for the purpose of funding an NSA endowment. Jim commits to seeking that \$25,000, starting with BOD, life members in MT, life members beyond MT, then, if necessary, the rest of our membership. There is a significant tax break for MT residents on state taxes (40% tax credit). The motion passed unanimously.

Mike Overby made a motion **to establish a task force to write a job description and define pros/cons of hiring/contracting a person or group, and obtain estimates of cost to help with work of running the NSA. Consider the relationship of this position to the NSA President. This motion passed unanimously. Mike Overby will chair this task group with Guy Hurlbutt and Bob Dayton assisting.**

A motion passed **to reimburse Bob Dayton for expenses associated with Brett Russ attending the BOD meeting.**

- **KING 5 TV use of copyright materials – Cherry/Lufkin**

This station used some of NSA's copyrighted material without permission on a segment about smokejumpers on their Evening Magazine program. After some back and forth with the TV station, we suggested they make a donation to the NSA scholarship fund. Jim Cherry read his e-mail on August 30<sup>th</sup>, to King 5 addressing our concerns and suggesting the donation. The board discussed options and whether the use was intentional or accidental, and whether this was a battle we want to fight and how. Guy's suggestion is drop it. **A motion passed for Jim to make a phone call, say we'll drop it, except we'd like a copy of their news segment for our archives and credit if used in the future.**

- **General discussion of a reunion in 2015 for all bases to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first official fire jumps. – BOD**

The 2015 national reunion will celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> fire jump. National reunions require a tremendous amount of work, so we need to get a crew of volunteers identified pretty soon to start the planning and work. The location will be Missoula, MT.

- **Suggestions for continuing the practice of receiving up-dates from BLM and USFS leadership**

The BOD agrees that these updates are informative and valuable and would like to sustain them, sometimes in person, sometimes by conference call. Tom Boatner will contact Bill Cramer and Hector Madrid and ask for their support in maintaining these connections and to be the future conduit for requesting updates.

### **Parachute system**

Tim Dehaas, USFS Aerial Attack Systems Specialist, and Bob Baird, USFS Deputy Director of Fire joined us by conference call to explain their current study to decide on a future USFS smokejumper parachute system. Bob wants us to have a good understanding of what they're doing and why. They plan to have a recommendation by December 1 to go up to FS senior leadership with a decision expected after the 1<sup>st</sup> of year. They have 2 objectives: increase operational effectiveness and reduce landing injuries. These 2 objectives were agreed upon 4 years ago after the Interagency Smokejumper Delivery Study. The FS has used the Ram Air system in R-1 with BLM support: trainers, equipment, SOPs, AARs. MTDC has looked at other Ram Air technology, i.e. static-lined Ram Air systems. They jumped a military static-lined system. It is used by the military for high altitude jumps. Their test jumps determined that it is not conducive to side-door exits at low altitude. They have gained expertise on the BLM system, both operational and financial. Geographical constraints must be considered, like tight spots in tall timber. They are preparing a briefing paper to define issue(s). Tim is working with USFS Base Managers, plus the R-1 Fire Director and MTDC. A risk assessment is also being considered. Injury rates and costs must be compared and considered. Ram airs may reduce landing injuries, but geographical constraints must also be considered.

The number of training jumps has increased across the board, but ram air rookies get more. The numbers currently are 15 jumps for round rookies, 25 for ram air rookies, plus more refresher jumps, year by year.

Chuck Sheley mentioned the trade-off between increased training costs and the money saved by stopping one big, costly fire, plus any increased IA effectiveness using squares to staff fires.

Bob mentioned that the commonly heard phrase that “smokejumpers are the most expensive firefighter” is not true. Smokejumper costs are in line with other firefighter types. Interagency cooperation is better than ever. The annual interagency base managers meeting is Nov 26-28<sup>th</sup> at NAFRI, Tucson.

There was a good discussion about the continued need to eliminate artificial/bureaucratic barriers to the use of smokejumpers or any other firefighting resource.

- **Set future meeting dates and locations – BOD**

Ease and economy of access for BOD members should be a consideration. Missoula Base Reunion; July 12-13, 2012. Some suggestions: Salt Lake City, Denver, Boise, Spokane.

We decided on March 20-21, Wednesday and Thursday in Boise. **Leo Cromwell will look for a meeting and social location. Tom Boatner will pursue inviting representatives from the Boise and McCall bases, FS and BLM fire operations at NIFC, and Tim De Haas from FS Aviation to the Boise meeting.**

Next Meeting topic-how can we be more proactive in advancing the smokejumper program?

John Helmer talked **about whether our Statement of Conditions, our balance sheet, should be put in the newsletter twice a year. The decision was made to do it. Bob Dayton will send it to Chuck for the next newsletter by 10/10/12.**

**Chuck Sheley requested support from NSA for the ongoing work at the Siskyou Smokejumper Base in the amount of \$1000.** This request passed.

Fred Cooper talked about representing the NSA at the USFS reunion in Vail, CO this past summer. An active McCall smokejumper was present. They suited up a bunch of people in jump gear including former Chief, Dale Bosworth.

- **Evaluation of the meeting – BOD**

Wi-fi and conference call capability are good to have. Good meeting management. Good to have a social, if possible, in conjunction with our meetings. The meeting adjourned at 11:30.

Attending: Jim Cherry, Tom Boatner, Chuck Sheley, Fred Cooper, John Marker, Charlie Brown, Roger Savage, Ron Stoleson, John Packard, Leo Cromwell, Charlotte Larson, Larry Longley, Guy Hurlbutt, John Helmer, Larry Lufkin, John McDaniel, Mike Overby, Bob Dayton, Gary Baker, Brent Russ (CPA), Tony Peiffer (guest)

Not attending: Doc Smith