

IDITAROD TRAIL COMMITTEE, INC.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
February 25, 2005
Millennium Alaskan Hotel

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President John Handeland at 9:05 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Richard Burmeister, John Handeland, Lee Larsen, Sam Maxwell, Mark Moderow, Mike Owens, Jim Palin, Dan Seavey, Rick Swenson,

Members absent: Joe Redington Sr. (excused and on the trail)

Others present: Chas St. George, Director of Public Relations; Jack Niggemyer, Race Manager; Mark Nordman, Race Marshal; Stuart Nelson, Jr., DVM, Chief Veterinarian, Don Patterson, Finance Director; Joanne Potts, Race Director/Recording Secretary; Stan Hooley, Executive Director; Chris Blankenship, Manager, 5th Ave store; Joe Runyan, Eric Begley and Darcy Marsh of Outdoor Life Network

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Burmeister/Moderow moved to approve the agenda. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 2, 2005

Palin/Moderow moved to approve the minutes of December 2, 2005.

Palin asked to have it noted that he didn't vote on the motion because he is on the Board of Directors.

On Page 10, everything should be struck after the race and said should be provided in writing.

Palin/Moderow motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Hooley introduced the people from the Outdoor Life Network.

Darcy Marsh noted that the OLN would be doing five hours of broadcasting on the 2005 Race. He also talked about having he west cam this year that will make it possible to shoot close up shots from far away.

Runyan noted that he is really excited about being able to explore the subtleties of the race.

Marsh commented that the biggest story is about the dogs and they will be doing several vignettes from the beginning to the end about the care of the dogs.

Seavey asked how they were going to handle dog deaths. Runyan commented that they will be reported as part of the event.

Marsh explained that John Carter, the executive producer, has said that the aim of OLN is to elevate this show to a national level of enthusiasm, so all the issues have to be dealt with.

Runyan commented that OLN wants to develop the product and make this package valuable. He said they are looking at the next three years and beyond.

Hooley commented that OLN had heeded Iditarod's advice to put a team together that had experience and longevity with the Iditarod. He said these guys are as sensitive to the issues as anyone in this room.

He explained that the coverage will begin on April 2 and there will be five nights of coverage. He said we've never had this caliber of coverage for the Iditarod. We have a powerful story to tell in terms of the canine athletes and a significant block of this show will tell this story.

Marsh explained that there will be four cameramen and 2 helicopters and a 185.

Swenson asked how they planned on covering the race without affecting the competition.

Marsh explained that it would be impossible to cover the race without being on the trail. He said they would need the mushers' help in knowing what to do out there and they would make every effort to not cause a problem. He said they don't want to help or hinder any mushers and would welcome any ideas of what they can do. He said they would not wake mushers up. He said he can imagine that if there is a big group of mushers camped, their helicopter might land, do their job and then take off.

Nordman offered to sit down with the OLN crew and help educate them about covering the race.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Handeland offered condolences to Lee Larsen on the passing of his mother-in-law and to Robin and Charlie Boulding on the stillbirth of their baby.

He commented that there is a lot of snow on the end of the trail.

He said that he, Lee and Sam have had discussions on Hooley's employment agreement and that will be taken up in executive session.,

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hooley commented that a written report was sent to the board members via e-mail.

He said this is the third largest race in history. He said 30% are rookies, 80% are male and 20% female.

He explained that the last two Idita-Riders will be sold at the banquet. He explained that Gary Paulsen had been the first musher to get a locked bid. Then he withdrew and his rider was put with someone else and was refunded \$5,000, so the total ended up under last year's record.

He explained that we have gone through a complete redesign of the website and the new website was just opened a few days ago.

Maxwell asked about web cams on the trail. Hooley explained that there will be streaming video of the start and live finish and web cams at McGrath and Nome.

Larsen commented that the board members get so many e-mails with virus messages. Hooley suggested that we should create an e-mail account for the board members and forward the e-mails.

Hooley explained that our deal with GCI has changed. And this year we carry the risk of spending more money that we'd like to spend. He said the more people who watch the streaming video the more it costs. He said that pay for view is the ultimate answer but that GCI opted out of that this year.

Swenson asked why there were \$70,000 in unexpected race expenses. Hooley explained that the biggest part of that was the change in relationship with GCI. They are writing us a check for \$210,000 a year and we are paying for comms services, which we haven't done before.

Swenson asked if we have the ability of cutting off the streaming video if it becomes obvious that it is costing too much. Hooley explained that we couldn't pull the plug now for the start but we would have time to make a decision for the finish. He said that building the communications infrastructure is an expensive project.

Handeland commented that it seems to him that streaming video is an experiment, and depending on the outcome, he sees it as something that would pay for view.

Hooley explained that GCI said the pay for view infrastructure would cost about \$7,000,000 and they said they weren't in the best position to do that.

Moderow noted that there is a corresponding increase in the revenue to the increase in comms expenses.

Palin/Maxwell moved to accept the staff reports. Motion passed.

PUBLIC RELATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hooley introduced Chas St. George. St. George discussed and distributed new articles that had come out in the national media about the Iditarod. He also reported that there was a segment on the Westminster Dog Show about the Iditarod and that the Today Show had done a segment which showed on February 19.

Mark Moderow asked about whom to contact if media contacts board members as we get closer to the race. Hooley asked that he still be contacted and he'll decide where it should go from there.

Owens commented that Paul Zahn was less than kind to Mitch Seavey last year and said we don't want to set our champion up to be sabotaged this year.

Hooley reported that there is a new potential sponsor coming up for the start of the race to take a look at it.

RACE MANAGER'S REPORT

Niggemyer reported that there is a lot of snow and that trail conditions are changing hourly. He said they are hauling into McGrath and Unalakleet and that a crew is at Eagle Island putting up tent frames.

He said the announcement will come tomorrow with regard to whether the re-start will be in Wasilla or Willow. He said we are not going to Eagle River.

Seavey asked if there will be sufficient straw at every checkpoint. Niggemyer said that there will be.

Seavey asked what has been done at Rainy Pass to make it more musher friendly. Niggemyer explained that there is a new building, a weather port and a wall tent. He said the parking area has been moved closer to the checkpoint.

He also noted that there are extra markers to deal with the stretch on the coast that was affected by the big storm.

Swenson asked about the bumps between Skwentna and Rainy Pass. Niggemyer said they aren't as bad as usual and that stretch will be drug this week.

Maxwell said the trail is better than it's ever been but the moose will not get off the trail.

Niggemyer said the trail to Old Woman is bumpy and the BLM is going to drag that portion.

Owens asked about the trail out of Knik for the Jr. Iditarod. Niggemyer said we usually use a commercial groomer out of Big Lake to drag that section when we go that way but the Jr. Iditarod hadn't asked for it to be drug.

Handeland asked why we aren't more involved in the needs of the Jr. Iditarod.

Owens stated that there will be 21 mushers going out of there on Saturday and it would be nice if that had a decent trail.

Seavey asked if there had been any progress on a sponsorship firm. Hooley said that we can analyze this and make a decision at the post race meeting.

Seavey commented that we don't want to lose track of the long term planning.

Nordman noted that the decision for the re-start will be based on safety of the dogs. He said the decision will be announced at noon on Saturday.

CHIEF VETERINARIAN'S REPORT

Nelson noted that he had a balanced crew this year of rookie and veteran veterinarians.

Seavey commented that he and Burmeister had been requesting lists for dog owners of how the veterinary research will help them but he still hasn't seen that. He said he hopes to see a response to that question – what are we learning about everyday dog care?

RACE MARSHAL'S REPORT

Burmeister asked about the drawing for Rachael Scdoris and Paul Ellering.

Nordman stated that options had been discussed. They will draw in regular positions and start in those positions on Saturday. On Sunday each will miss their start times and they will go out last. He said they will have two-way radios.

Nordman noted that the report from Tyrell Seavey after the Tustumena was that he was quite pleased with her ability to drive a sled. He was concerned about her ability to control the team. He said if there are any questions about how we are dealing with Scdoris, they should be referred to Nordman.

Moderow asked about whether there would be any compromise regarding dog care. Nelson commented that it is important to be aware that if she has to go so slow that she is very far back, then the infrastructure gets spread out to the detriment of the other teams.

Larsen commented that in Nordman's report, there is concern about the quality of the person on the drag sled at the start. Nordman noted that the person riding the drag sled has to be able to navigate the team.

JR. IDITAROD

Moderow said he had asked for this to be on the agenda. He said he is satisfied with the report in the board packet but it raises questions as to funding and interaction with the ITC. He said there may be a clear accounting of funds back and forth but originally it was not funded well. He said we're not doing the Idita-Rider funding anymore but we need to make sure the Jr. Iditarod is funded.

Handeland commented that we need to explore and solidify the relationship between Iditarod and Jr. Iditarod.

Palin asked why the Jr. Iditarod could start in Wasilla and the Iditarod cannot. Hooley explained that the biggest problem area for the Iditarod is from Klapp Road to Knik Lake and the Jr. Iditarod doesn't go that way.

Seavey said it had been discussed to make the Jr. Iditarod a qualifier for the Iditarod.

Larsen noted that by the use of the name we are vulnerable and could have legal entanglements if that isn't tightened up.

Hooley noted that the cash support from the ITC has doubled in the past 13 years. He said he will schedule the Jr. Iditarod for a work session.

Larsen asked about the Race Program. He noted that there were misspellings in the Cabela's ad and Potts commented that they did the ad. He said he wished that it hadn't been Dave Straub's dog in the picture and Potts said she didn't see the picture captions.

Hooley stated that we may be changing again. He explained that the person at Alaska Newspapers with whom we made the agreement has gone and her successor wants out.

DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Dan Seavey: He said he attended the Tustumena and had a chance to observe Scdoris and said he is much more comfortable with her running Iditarod than he was last year.

Lee Larsen: He said he was here for his first Jr. Iditarod. He said the opportunity is out there to create a positive feeling about the Iditarod.

Jim Palin: He will be starting a review of the bylaws tomorrow.

Mark Moderow: He said we have to stay on track with our strategic planning and we have to stay on top of getting the rules done early. He said at the next meeting he will make a motion to send out a member, musher, sponsor survey.

Sam Maxwell: He started volunteering in 1989 and said it is amazing how well the organization is doing. He said he is impressed that we have a good staff and good volunteers.

Rick Swenson: He said he is happy with how things are going. He said we need to come up with a plan to throw out a lifeline to other organizations in this sport.

Mike Owens: He said the housing list has been e-mailed and he hopes to have it available by the mushers' meeting.

Rick Swenson: He asked about the plan for passing out musher packets at the banquet. Potts explained that there would be a table set up past where they finish the autographing and they will pick them up there.

John Handeland: He said he appreciated the work of the staff and the volunteers. He said we always need to assure that safety of the dogs is the most important thing.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The meeting was adjourned following the executive session.