



ACA Virtual BOD Meeting Thursday, March 12, 2026

Meeting Start time: 7:30 PM ET

Attendance

- **BOD Members Present:** Suzanne Britt (President & meeting host), Bev Cosslett, Jonas Ecker, Robert Kauffman, Si Norton, Ryan Rushton, Risa Shimoda, Aaron Small, Stef Stannard, Zach “Bug” Lokken, Jillian Elwart
- **BOD Members Not Present:** Bill Caruso
- **Staff Present:** Beth Spilman, Krista Lenzmeier
- **Quorum** confirmed

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Board unanimously approved the February 12, 2026 Board meeting minutes.

Membership & Revenue

- Transition to Sport 80 has resulted in a **small decline in membership revenue**
- Issue identified: users are not easily finding how to add:
 - Competition licenses
 - SEIC dues

Membership Growth Initiatives

- Email campaign sent to **200,000+ contacts** in support of a U.S. Coast Guard-funded paddler study
- Incentive: **3-month free ACA membership**
 - Current uptake: **77 new sign-ups**
 - Success metric will be **conversion to paid memberships after trial period**

Discipline & Marketing Initiatives

- “Paddle with a Pro” campaign launched across SEIC disciplines:
 - Positive initial feedback
 - Success defined as adoption by multiple disciplines
- Expanded promotion of LLB grant opportunity:
 - Resulted in 65 new organizational members
 - Winners selected; announcement pending

Programming Updates

- **Summer Solstice Event**
 - Planning has not yet begun
- **Leader & Guide Certifications**
 - Ongoing collaboration with SEIC leadership
 - Considered an attainable near-term goal
- **Smart Start Program**
 - U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary ordered 300 co-branded copies
 - Exploring partnerships with:
 - Boy Scouts
 - Girl Scouts
 - Other youth organizations
 - Led in part by Intro to Paddling Committee Chair Robin
- **Learning Management System (LMS)**
 - Progress made in discussions with Sport 80 integrations
 - Increased focus expected now that initial implementation has stabilized

Fundraising & Sponsorship

- **Branding Initiative**
 - Updates to competition logo to be presented at next Competition Council meeting
- **Grant Application**
 - Submitted \$220,000 proposal to Susan Crown Exchange
 - Not selected; high competition noted
- **Corporate Sponsorship**
 - Near final agreement
 - Benefits expected:
 - Apparel support for athletes
 - Member discounts
 - Technical product collaboration
- **Donation Received**
 - \$32,000 from Indiana Canoe Racing Council
 - Established fund for sprint athletes

Fiscal Management

- Financial process improvements nearing completion
- Audit status:
 - All auditor questions answered
 - Final report pending

Ethics Committee

- **Conflict of Interest Forms**

- 100% completion by board and staff
- Next steps:
 - Ethics Committee review of declared conflicts
 - Documentation of review process
- **Center for SafeSport**
 - One active case
 - Investigator assigned
 - Case expected to take several months due to complexity

Events, Operations & Partnerships

- Hosting agreement in progress for upcoming Congress event in conjunction with slalom world championships (Oklahoma City/Riverport)
- Strong international participation noted for upcoming Oklahoma City event (150 athletes from 17 countries)
- Coordination ongoing with United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee regarding international/neutral athletes and visa considerations
- ACA contributed to international visa guidance distributed by International Canoe Federation

Board & Leadership Updates

- New board member introduced: Jillian Elwart (Paracanoe Athlete Representative)
- Board conducted member introductions; positive onboarding and engagement noted

Operations Update

- ACA office successfully relocated (Feb 27); move completed in one day with volunteer support
- Staff reported to be settled, motivated, and benefiting from improved workspace

Research & Data Initiatives

- Partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago on U.S. Coast Guard-funded national boating safety survey
- ACA supported outreach to ~200,000 contacts; administrative fee collected
- Survey results will be publicly available; no direct data ownership by ACA

Financial Report

- Current operating deficit approximately \$32,000, noted as typical for this time of year and trending positively
- Audit preparation underway with minor outstanding items
- Clarification requested regarding timing of U.S. Performance Center funding

- Noted receipt of funds from the Indiana Racing Council, designated for sprint athlete support (A-final Olympic events)

SEIC Motions & Approval

- SEIC motions presented and approved unanimously:
 - Updates to certification processes across new pathways
 - Integration of Leader/Guide policies into SEIC manual
 - Addition of tethered rescue swimming skill (Swiftwater Rescue)
 - Removal of multicraft requirement for Guide certifications (recommended vs. required)

SEIC Program & Certification Updates

- Identified gap in certification completion due to missing requirements (e.g., CPR/First Aid documentation)
- Emphasis on Instructor Trainers ensuring candidate completion
- Planned Instructor Trainer/Educator engagement call
- Arkansas state registry now recognizes ACA certifications
- Continued expansion of Leader/Guide pathways through partnerships with:
 - Instructor networks
 - Outdoor organizations
 - Government agencies

Membership & Retention

- Discussion of implementing multi-year membership options to improve retention
- Finance Committee to evaluate feasibility

Advocacy & Public Policy

- Public Policy Committee reactivated to define ACA advocacy priorities
- Key focus areas:
 - Life jacket (PFD) usage
 - Paddlesports education requirements
 - Funding mechanisms for boating safety
- Emphasis on:
 - Clarifying ACA positions vs. policies
 - Aligning advocacy with ACA mission
 - Increasing member and state-level engagement
- Committee tasked with developing recommendations and reporting back

Nominating & Governance

- Draft Board Elections Policy introduced for review

- Key elements include:
 - Standardized nomination and election procedures
 - Third-party voting systems
 - Ballot integrity safeguards
- Board feedback requested by March 19
- Discussion on strategic recruitment to address Board skill and representation gaps

Regional Activity Council (RAC) Update

- New Regional Directors onboarded
- Kayak 101 program expanding to 9 confirmed states, with additional states in development
- Continued focus on participation growth and outreach

Meeting Logistics

- Trial of earlier meeting start time (7:30 PM ET) planned
- Potential adjustment to 8:00 PM ET based on attendance

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM ET