ACA Virtual BOD Meeting
Thursday, September 17, 2026

Meeting Start time: 7:30 PM ET

Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting was called to order. A quorum was established with 11 board members present.

Approval of August 2026 Minutes

The Board reviewed and approved the August 2026 meeting minutes. No questions or corrections were raised.

2026 Board Assessment

The Board discussed the results of the 2026 Board Assessment conducted through BoardSource/USOPC. Areas of relatively high confidence included ethics and values, confidentiality, athlete voice/alignment, crisis prevention and risk management, and the use of non-Board committee members. Areas identified for continued attention included management succession planning, Board/management trust, strategic alignment, onboarding, and crisis prevention/risk management. USOPC is conducting assessments across NGBs and is expected to provide additional benchmarking information.

Executive Director Report

USOPC Re-Certification Audit
The USOPC re-certification audit has begun. ACA is reviewing compliance requirements and preparing requested documentation.

Learning Management System
Approximately 15 courses have been created. Staff are working to integrate Sport 80 and eTrainU so that the systems can communicate electronically. The goal is to launch the first courses in early November.

Safe Sport
The Board received an update on several active Safe Sport matters. The number of active cases is unusually high for ACA, although the overall track record remains strong.

One athlete has received an indefinite ban, and additional cases involving an athlete, coach, and instructor are under investigation or review. The Board discussed the importance of Safe Sport training and being prepared to address situations involving sanctioned individuals at ACA events.

Increased Safe Sport case activity could potentially affect ACA's annual Safe Sport costs.

Funding and Grants

- ACA did not receive any Coast Guard grants for the upcoming year. Feedback from the Coast Guard is pending.
- The U.S. Performance Center has outstanding payments totaling approximately $300,000; an update was expected following an upcoming discussion with the organization.
- USOPC funding for the coming year is expected to increase by approximately $250,000, including approximately $100,000 in increased direct athlete support.
- USOPC provided positive feedback regarding ACA and its coaching program.
- The Board recognized recent athlete accomplishments, including Blake's world championship gold medal/world record and Jonas's fifth-place World Championship finish. The men's K4 also reached the B final and was the fastest Western Hemisphere team.

Other Grant
ACA received a $20,000 grant from Move United to support efforts to attract more physically disabled individuals to paddling. Kelsey and Jed prepared the grant application.

Membership Research Project

The Board discussed a membership research project being conducted with Arizona State University's Center for Olympic Studies. The project will examine how ACA can increase new-member acquisition and improve member renewal and retention.

The project will include:

- Quantitative analysis of current and former member data.
- Qualitative research through approximately four to six focus groups.
- Focus groups representing competition, recreational, and instructor members.
- A customer journey map examining awareness, trial, adoption, and loyalty.
- Analysis of demographic and potentially psychographic information.
- Examination of relationships among members, social media followers, donors, and other ACA audiences.
- Analysis of the factors influencing renewal and non-renewal.

The research team intends to complete substantial work by Thanksgiving.

Privacy was discussed. ACA will use an NDA and provide anonymized data rather than names, email addresses, or other identifying information.

The researchers are not currently charging ACA for their work. USOPC may provide funding if ACA needs to purchase outside data.

The Board discussed the potential value of understanding what members perceive as valuable about ACA, whether ACA's perceived value matches the value the organization believes it provides, why members renew or leave, and opportunities for membership growth.

Motion: Approve the membership research project.
Action: Motion approved.

Montgomery Whitewater Center / Paddle Sports Trade Coalition

The Board discussed the announcement that Montgomery Whitewater Center had closed for the season.

The status of future events at the facility, including a planned World Cup event, remains uncertain.

The Paddle Sports Trade Coalition event scheduled for October at the facility will not take place as originally planned. Alternative arrangements may be under consideration.

CEO/Executive Leadership Position and Succession Planning

The Board held an extended discussion regarding the position that needs to be filled following the departure of the previous COO. There was general agreement that ACA needs another senior-level staff position and that the position should contribute to succession planning as well as organizational capacity.

Areas of discussion included:

- Whether the position should be a COO, director-level position, or another structure.
- Whether a fractional professional or part-time arrangement could work.
- The organization's financial capacity.
- The need for additional expertise that does not currently exist within the organization.
- Business development.
- Fundraising/development.
- Marketing and communications strategy.
- Potential project-management responsibilities.
- The relationship between the position and long-term succession planning.

There was general agreement that the existing job description should be rewritten before recruitment begins.

Action: An ad hoc group consisting of Si, Robert, and Beth will review and rewrite the job description and develop recommendations regarding the role, responsibilities, and desired skill set.

Beth will also provide information regarding the compensation previously associated with the position to help inform the budget discussion.

The revised position will be brought back to the Board in October with the goal of beginning recruitment thereafter.

October In-Person Board Meeting

The Board agreed to hold the October Board meeting in person at the US Performance Center, with a video conference option for members unable to attend.

Dates: October 9–11, 2026

Friday afternoon/evening will be used for arrival and preliminary work, including development of the Executive Director performance review. Saturday, October 10, will be the full Board meeting. A half-day meeting is planned for Sunday, October 11, with departures afterward.

The meeting will be hybrid to accommodate Board members who cannot attend in person.

Anticipated priorities include:

- Approval of the 2027 budget.
- Year-end financial review.
- Executive Director performance review.
- 2027 performance objectives.
- Fundraising strategy.
- Membership growth and value.
- Review of the current strategic plan.
- Discussion of strategic planning for the next phase.
- Discussion of the new staff position and recruitment.
- High-performance program updates.
- Updates from SEIC, RAC, Competition Council, and other relevant groups.
- Potential onboarding/involvement of newly elected Board members.

Staff attendance has not been planned as a requirement; staff may participate remotely for specific agenda items as needed.

2026–2027 Budget

The Board received a preliminary budget update.

For 2026:

- Revenue is expected to finish approximately on budget.
- Expenses are expected to finish approximately $20,000–$30,000 below budget.
- No significant year-end financial surprises are anticipated.

Revenue diversification remains a major focus for 2027.

Potential revenue opportunities discussed included:

- Shopify/Printify merchandise sales.
- Sport 80 event registration.
- The new learning management system.
- Fundraising/development efforts.
- Sponsorship opportunities.
- Potential future events such as Paddlefest.
- Potential athlete-level fundraising or sponsorship opportunities.

The Board discussed whether membership dues may need to increase, particularly in relation to staffing and future investment in fundraising.

The budget process will establish a baseline operating projection and then consider additional revenue opportunities and proposed expenditures.

Requests from RAC and other groups will be incorporated into the draft budget, along with ElectionBuddy costs and other known expenses.

Action: Final budget discussion and approval will occur at the October Board meeting.

Annual Meeting and Board Elections

The annual meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2026.

The Board election is currently underway, with voting scheduled to close September 30. The Board discussed current voter participation, which had increased following a recent reminder.

Adjournment - 8:45 PM