

OEA Board of Directors Meeting: Minutes

March 19, 2026

Present: Sarah Richardson, Bernadette Johnston, Ann Neal, Tori Pengelly, Sue Lavery, Donna Van Beek, Winnie Chiu, Kendal Lehari, Doug Topalovic, Gabrielle Turcotte, Charlotte Hodgson, Xavier Traisnel, Jacquie Kelton, Doug Topalovic, Stephanie Shatilla.

Regrets: Nikki Maclellan

Call to Order: 7:03 p.m.

1. Meeting Opening

- *Sarah moved, Sue seconded, and it was carried, to approve the minutes with corrections for the OEA Board of Directors meeting of February 12, 2026.*
- *Sarah moved, Winnie seconded, and it was carried, to approve the agenda for the meeting of the OEA Board of Directors on March 19, 2026.*

2. President's Report

Sarah noted that the main topic of this meeting was to approve the budget for 2026. However, she also briefed the Board on the recipients of the 2026 Zara Buren Memorial Award, Grants of Distinction and Grants of Potential, which were posted on the OEA social media platforms. She explained that EC was now more closely involved in the process and as a registered charity would play a larger role and disburse the funds to the recipients further to some relevant changes related to charitable giving in the Canadian Income Tax Act. have been announced and posted on our socials.

3. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reviewed the February financial report, prior to reviewing the 2026 budget. She noted income projection from levies and membership fees and sponsored awards, followed by estimates for expenses related to the Annual Meeting of Members and other programming for the 2026 season. Key expenses include \$5,500 for the AMM, funds set aside for software expenses, website hosting and annual awards. Doug confirmed that he and Charlotte would be able to manage website activities without involving outside contracting. The Board has already approved the expenses related to hosting three Rider Development Days. The Annual Awards budget includes increased amounts for cash prizes, ribbons, and trophies to account for inflation,

Additional line items in the 2026 budget include membership processing fees to OE, social media expenses and the funding associated with the Volunteer Incentive Program. The largest item in the budget continues to be the Competition Improvement Program (CIP), funded at \$30,000. This year, she will propose possible changes to the CIP. The budget may also be updated to include U25 Leaderboard awards.

Following the presentation, Sarah moved, Ann seconded, and it was carried, to approve the Budget for 2026 as written and tabled at this meeting.

Member Appreciation Funds. The Treasurer then turned to the issue of Member Appreciation Funds and a discussion ensued about whether to commit those Funds fully to a BBQ at the Eastern Canadian Championships at Wesley Clover Parks, as has been the practice for the past three years. A discussion ensued that included the following key interventions: the amount we budget for members appreciation would not cover the costs of the BBQ proposed by WCP; it may not be the best use of our limited funds to show gratitude to our membership given that the BBQ would service non-members and even non-riders; perhaps there is an alternate way to use the funds this season. To look into possible alternatives, the Treasurer agreed to lead a Working Group to explore some of the ideas proposed at the BOD Meeting and report back to our meeting in April. Doug, Jackie and Winnie volunteered to join that Working Group.

4. Communications

Doug provided an update on communications, highlighting the recent webinars and the promotion of the Zara Buren Memorial Award. He also reported on plans to update website content from 2025 to 2026. Directors were asked to carefully review their respective areas of the website for outdated information and propose relevant changes.

Doug expressed some concern about the low attendance of webinars. He noted that the team would continue to promote the final webinar in the new Winter Webinar Series, and to conduct a post-mortem analysis after its completion. Sarah mentioned that she had received positive feedback from presenter Sarah Roney about her experience with the webinar.

One Director suggested posting reminders on WhatsApp, 20 minutes before webinars to increase attendance. The Treasurer noted concerns about emphasizing the need to review any expectations for social media promotion included in contracts to avoid overcommitting resources.

5. Committee Reports

- **Adult Riders.** Co-Chair, Ann Neal, reported on the Adult Riders' Program and advised the Board that it is preparing an upcoming webinar series with Katie Wood, developing an idea for an Adult Rider Scavenger Hunt, and bringing back the Adult

Rider Team Challenge for a third year. Details are being finalized and information for social media and the website will be ready before the next Board meeting.

- **U25**

U25 Co-Chair, Kendal Lehari, reviewed the U25 Program Proposal for 2026 including the following items:

- A webinar series featuring speakers like Justin Ridgewell, Karl Slazak, Emily Gilbert, and Katie Malensack, focusing on topics relevant to U25 riders.
- An assessment clinic, May 30-3, targeting U25 Riders preparing for the North American Young Rider Championships (NAYC). Grandview has agreed to rent their facility for \$500.
- A new "Red Ribbon Award" initiative for riders who consistently place top three at the same level in three events.
- U25 Championship support.
- A Year-End Finale and U25 Team Challenge to be held at Grandview on October 4, the last horse trial of the season in Ontario.

Fundraising was identified as a key challenge. It was also noted that it is important to clearly communicate to potential program members that certain benefits, such as leaderboard cash and travel grants, are contingent on successful fundraising.

- **Clinics/Education.** Nothing more to report beyond the webinar series that has been discussed in the context of communications.
- **Organizers.** Nothing to report. There will be a meeting of Organizers before the next BOD meeting.
- **Officials.** No updates.
- **EC Rules and Local Divisions.** Sue reported that the Guidelines for EV75 need to be amended to correct a width measurement on XC fences that is currently wider than that for EV85. She also presented some amendments for the EV60 Guidelines that replace some specific instances of technical elimination with 60 penalty points, to encourage riders to learn from their mistakes while being able to continue their competition. *There was a general agreement that these changes were useful, and it was agreed that Guidelines will be circulated by email for a vote in the coming days.*
- **Rider Development Days.** Co-Chair, Ann Neal, reported on the OEA's Rider Development Days, with dates proposed for April, May, and July. Five venues expressed interest in hosting a development day including: Wesley Clover Parks, Steven's Creek Farm, Wits End, Glenarden and Caledon. Dates and locations will be finalized for three Development Days, prior to the April Meeting of the BOD.

- **AMM & Awards.** Stephanie reviewed the lessons learned at the OEA's AMM in 2025. The BOD discussed possible options for the AMM including considering a banquet, thinking about holding the AMM separately from the Awards Ceremony, and other possible alternatives to the Royal Winter Fair, which has been the venue for the past 3 years. However, given the costs associated with holding a Year-end banquet along with historic poor levels of attendance, and the need for a quorum to complete the business at the AMM, the BOD agreed that the OEA will continue to hold its AMM in conjunction with the Annual Awards Ceremony at the Royal Winter Fair for 2026. Sarah and Donna agreed to join the Organizing Committee for the AMM/Year End Awards, which is Chaired by Stephanie.
 - **Coaching.** No updates.
 - **Leaderboard.** No updates.
 - **Volunteers.** Winnie shared plans for volunteer recruitment for the 2026 season.
6. **Other matters.** In response to a question, Bernadette agreed to report back to the next meeting about the prospect of the return of the Thoroughbred Incentive Program for 2026.

Next meeting: April 16, 2026.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m. by Sarah, seconded by Bernadette.