

## **Pennsylvania Hillclimb Association**

### **Minutes of the November 4, 2023, Critique Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by President Rich Rock at 1:05 PM, after which it was determined that a quorum of Regional Representatives was in attendance.

**Officers:** Rich Rock, President; Trevor Filipowicz, Vice President; Eli Sharp, Secretary; and Grace Huntzinger, Treasurer.

**Regional Representatives:** Chuck Christ, Mike Daley, Bill Feist, John Felten\*, Dale Gogel\*, Glenn Hoffman, Hugh Maloney, Don McLaughlin, Sue Salsburg, Rick Terrill, Joe Whiteley\* and Gordon Wise.

**Alternative Representatives:** Don DeHart.

**PHA members:** Bill Ascherman, Dillon Axarlis, Dustin Axarlis, Melinda Axarlis, Mike Axarlis, Gibby Bozicevich\*, Mike Company, Joe Cyburt, Mary Anne Fieux, Crystal Hoegg, Matt Hoegg, Richard (Rick) Kase, Don Kennedy, Cory Michael, Patti Murphy\*, Timm Murphy\*, Nancy Lewis, William (Bill) Norton, John Pitman, Carolyn Reider, Gary Reider, Donna Robinson, Mike Robinson, Adam Weaver\*, Mike White, Vince Wiczorek, George Witman, Karen Witman, and Linda Young.

[\* participated on Zoom]

**1. Meeting Design and Etiquette:** Eli S explained that we are trying to add a little bit more structure and design to the meetings in order to make them more efficient for everybody, and hopefully a better experience. She then gathered some high-level meeting rules from the group and created "The Pits" for parking items that come up until we get to the New Business section of the meeting.

**2. Treasurer's Report:** Grace H presented the 2023 YTD financials. The total in the PHA bank account is \$25,649.73. This includes \$8,108 for the insurance reserve (a pool to cover the \$1K deductible for claims at PHA events). Income of \$10,077 for the period included \$5,435 for the banquet, \$4,347 for Hillclimb assessment fees, with the remainder on other miscellaneous. Expenses of \$3,534.66 for the period do not yet include the banquet, and this is by far the major expense for the year. We spent about \$200 on an EZ-Up, bought some new stickers and a Zoom license, then on the website we spent \$240. She hadn't yet cashed any of the checks or done the Motorsports Reg for the banquet (waiting until after the event), hence there were \$2,760 in undeposited funds. Grace H said that we will probably be just about breaking even for the year once the banquet expenses are done, leaving about \$25,000 in the account. Gordon W made a motion to accept the report; Bill F seconded. The motion was approved.

**3. 2023 Season Review:** Rich R gave a summary of the season's statistics. We had 201 distinct drivers this year, and those drivers gave us a total of 621 entries for the year. The event-by-event numbers were: Jefferson 56, Spring Weatherly 87, Pagoda 62, Giants 99, Polish 75, Duryea 92, Shenandoah 55 and Fall Weatherley 95. The number of drivers who only competed at one event was 66, and another 35 ran only two events. In contrast, we had 9 people who ran at every event (8 in total), and 12 people who ran at 7 events.

**Polish Mountain:** John F started off by thanking the PHA, all the drivers the crews, family and friends that helped make the 15th running (out of 17 years) of the Polish Mountain Hillclimb a success. He explained that this was a very emotional day for him and that it was with great disappointment that the Polish Mountain Hillclimb will not be continuing.

The reasons were as follows:

- The Flintstone Volunteer Fire Department members held numerous meetings culminating in a unanimous vote to stop the Polish Mountain Hillclimb. They cited an aging membership that can't continue to shoulder the workload involved, and health concerns for some of their members.
- The paddock field is owned by a member of the Flintstone Volunteer Fire Department, who has allowed the use of the property at no charge. He has decided that he no longer wants to allow use of the property, as he uses this field to actively support his farming operation.
- The Western Maryland chapter W DC region SCCA decided to follow the Fire Department stance, with similar aging and health concerns for many of them.
- The permit requires multiple agencies to come together to support the Flintstone Volunteer Fire Department and the community of Flintstone. Without the involvement of the Fire Department, they are without the reason of supporting the event in the community.
- In summary, they have lost the help and support of many of the local individuals and infrastructure needed, to successfully operate the event. John F asked that everybody respect the decisions of those involved.

In closing, John F thanked everyone for their help and support over the past 17 years, without whom none of this could have been possible. He also said that he was grateful for the friendships created, and that he was leaving with some very fond memories, that will last a lifetime. Rich R said that we all very much we appreciate what everybody down there has done over the years. Gibby B wrote in the chat "John, thank you for all your hard work. We will miss you and the event."

**Spring Jefferson:** Rich R said there were 56 entries and that the event ran in the red about \$2,800. He then asked if people knew that Edwin (the track manager at Summit Point) was let go the week before the meeting. According to the job posting on the website "they are looking for someone to develop a strategy to skyrocket revenues." He also said that Kathleen, who was Edwin's assistant, is temporarily performing in the capacity of director, but as yet we have had no contract for 2024. Rich R said that last year was an almost \$4,000 increase over 2022 and he would not be shocked at another large increase for next year.

**Shenandoah:** Rick T shared a history of the numbers on the flipchart.

Year	Number of Drivers	Track Rental	Profit or (Loss)
2023	57	\$16,364	(\$4,200)
2022	54	\$11,364	(\$1,682)
2021	71	\$9,720	\$1,583
2020	82	48,017	\$3,723
2019	78	\$6,900	\$3,144
2018	88	\$6,600	\$4,783
2017	80	\$6,600	\$3,900
2016	76	\$6,600	\$2,947

For 2023 there would have needed to be 75 drivers to break even, and the track rental has increased 143% over the past 8 years. Steel Cities Region Board of Directors have unanimously voted not to continue to support the event.

**Weatherly:** Joe C thanked everyone for their support and explained some changes to their team (Secretary and Treasurer) for 2024. They are doing really well with sponsorship from local business and local government, and also have good support from drivers and workers. The new pavilion is really great and they have invested in a new PA system, thanks to the family of a driver. Carolyn R thanked Joe for all the porta-potties they have provided.

**Giants:** Bill F reported that they have a lot of younger volunteers and good support from the Fire Department. The mural on the container is also finished. Next year's dates are July 13/14. Sue S asked if they could get PA down into the lower pits to make it easier to hear when it is your run group. Some options (running a wire, an air horn, wireless mic and speaker) were discussed.

**Reading:** Rich R reported 62 entries for Pagoda with a loss of \$1800 and also low entry numbers for Duryea. He thanked everyone and especially Trevor F, for how the Saturday incident at Duryea was dealt with, and everyone keeping the news from being spread on social media. He also reported that reactions to the incident were better than he expected with no adverse feedback, meaning that the event is not in jeopardy. Grace H said that she locked down the PHA Facebook site before any comments got posted, and that going forward, this should be standard practice to do after any incidents. Rich R said that Alex (Ki's son) gave us a box of his coffee, and this would be handed out to everyone at the banquet. He thanked everyone that is involved in running all the PHA events.

#### **4. Changes to the Supps for 2024**

**4a. Street Prepared Classing:** Rich R said that we have been operating using the 2022 rules for Street Prepared (SP), while a committee comes up with a proposal for what to do. Mike R said that this change happened pretty late last year and they looked for input but did not hear very much. He offered to explore this more with the committee, but there are two options: Option 1 suspend for another year, Option 2 accept the SCCA SP classing for 2024. Trevor F said that we would need help to update the classing. Glen H suggested that we keep the SCCA rules as they pertain to us. George W said we have had 8 cars in CSP on several occasions but we will probably have none with these new rules (allowing turbo charged cars to run against normally aspirated). Mike R said that he has had many more people interested in preparation levels for cars. Grace H asked who is on the committee. Mike R said himself, Mark Aubele, and Bill F. It was agreed that George W and Glen H will also join this committee.

**4b. HANS requirement for 2024 Reminder:** Grace H and Vince W strongly supported this rule change after their experiences. Matt H said that a 'donut' style collar does not count. Adam W wrote in the chat "Will there be an expiration date for HANS?" Grace H said that this will have to be added to the supps, but she suggested we add 'refer to the GCR for HANS expiration date requirements', so we don't have to keep updating the supps if requirements change.

**4c. Supps Committee Volunteers:** Grace H asked for volunteers for a Supps committee to review the 2024 SCCA rules for time trials and see how our supps are going to need to change. She volunteered to do the editing of the supps, and Mike R, Matt H, Dillon A and Trevor F volunteered to do the technical content.

**5. Website:** Grace H reported that the PHA website has been updated and that she has been promoting our events on Facebook with good results. She said that she will set up a new Official Facebook page that will contain all the announcements with no other noise. She will also continue to post these in all the other usual groups and on the website. Grace H asked for suggestions of other groups to post in or other ways of advertising. She also created a poll that would be available at the banquet sign-in, to get people's ideas for new merchandise.

**6. Timing:** Nancy L thanked a core group of people who consistently showed up all year long to help with timing. She is still looking for assistance with the hardware setup each morning (only about 45 minutes), and help with running the software during the event. Drivers could volunteer for a half-day but her preference would be for somebody (a non-driver) from each event to volunteer. There were no reruns this year due to timing issues, but weather did cause some issues. She also had an issue with data uploading properly at Polish Mountain, but there is good support for when things like this happen, so it really is not difficult. Joe C suggested that if he could find two people to volunteer, he would be willing to make a donation to their cause. Grace H said this was a great idea, and suggested that we should do the same for the other events. Nancy L said that she asked the guy who set up our hardware for a quote for professional help, which was \$400-700 per day with lodging (as necessary). Bill N said that most people do not appreciate how much Nancy L and Steve L have done for timing and that we might have to pay for this in the future. Rich R said that tracks offer to provide workers but it is expensive. There was a discussion involving Bill F and Nancy L about ongoing costs for software (and hardware maintenance) versus paying for someone to provide timing, given the challenges in getting corner workers. Nancy L suggested that younger people (like 15-year-olds who cannot drive or corner work) would be good to train for timing. Rich R thanked Nancy L very much for everything she has done throughout the year, and particularly given all the challenges that she has faced.

## **7. New Business / non agenda Items:**

### **Questions / comments from the floor**

Joe C said that with the large numbers of entries, they are going to limit the lunchtime activities in order to save time at the Weatherly events. Mary Anne F asked if the PHA logo was on the website. Grace H showed everyone that it was already on the main page of the PHA website. John P and Bill N encouraged everyone to bring their cars to the Carlisle show. Don K requested a discussion on rule 9.20.B (open faced helmets) being pushed back another year. Rich R said that the current rule change will mean that you can continue to use open faced helmets for another two years. Mike R said that typically the updates are delayed anyway so it will probably be another three years or more. Vince W explained that there was a chunk taken out of the front of his closed faced helmet during his accident and he encouraged everyone to wear a full faced helmet.

### **Future Possible Events**

Polish Mountain: There was a discussion of possible alternate pit locations, given the land owner's decision to not use his field any more. There was also a discussion about the need for local people and volunteers in order to hold the event.

Hypothetical Hillclimb (location TBD) in West Virginia: Rich R explained that he had been approached by a State Senator from southern WV about holding a possible Hillclimb, starting from scratch. It would be a 6- or 7-hour drive, and is too far away for both us and the Southern Hillclimb organizations. They have checked out another more local hill that is really too short, and have nothing promising in the pipeline right now. There was a discussion about how much of a factor distance is when it comes to numbers of entries. Local venues definitely fare much better.

Local Options: Something at Pocono Raceway or a second Hillclimb at Giants, or a summer Weatherly were all discussed. Joe C said that the second event is definitely easier, but three would be too much. Bill F said that a two-day event at Pocono would be a problem because everyone would have to move tracks (and camp) between the days. Bill N said that the NEPA events at Pocono work really well, drivers also have to work and it's only a one-day event. Bill F clarified that the problem with Pocono is that the dates are all really booked up, so it is really hard

to get the same track for two days in a row. A one-day event would be much easier to schedule. Hugh M explained how NEPA run their events there and that they do 6 events per year.

Reading Airport: Rich R, Mike D and Bill N are going to be meeting the airport Manager next week with a view to a possible track sprint event. The track would be about 1 mile long.

Reading Hillclimbs: Rich R said the Pagoda will be worked on in the next few years which may involve Skyline Drive being closed, but not in 2024. Even if it is closed for construction, they will open it up for our events.

Shenandoah: The only way this will take place is if another Region takes on the event. This decision would need to happen by the end of the year. Nancy L asked if we could do two events at Jefferson instead of Shenandoah, if it is cheaper. Rich R confirmed that it is. There was a discussion about possible formats for this kind of event. Grace H said that we have had some success with attracting extra entries with the time trials classes. Nancy L suggested to stress the fact that passing is not allowed at our events, in order to attract more time trials people. Rich R asked if PHA should consider helping offset a loss from these events, in order to maintain a schedule. Grace H explained that this would mean increasing the assessment fee at each event in order to prevent depleting the treasury. Bill F suggested increasing the entry fees at Summit Point instead. There was further discussion about fees. Chuck C asked if PHA could supplement these events on a temporary basis, in order to preserve PHA events. Trevor F said that entry fees will have to increase, unless we can get sponsors to help out. Glen H talked about a 'mash up' event that Steel Cities Region held at Pitt Race, with multiple parts including a school, a time trial and a road race. They should have broken even on this large event but they had 'unexpected' costs from some poor behavior that occurred. Rich R asked for a quick show of hands for people in favor of his proposal to help soften any loss. On Zoom there were one in favor and one opposed, in the room most people were in favor with 6 opposed. Grace H asked what increasing the assessment fee from \$7 to \$15 would do (raising the entry fee by \$8 per driver) temporarily. Bill F said he would have to talk to the organization. Trevor F said that this is just a stop gap, in order to try and prevent three events from being lost. Joe C said he would like to do whatever their group can to help. Rick K made a motion to table this to the next meeting and come back with ideas. Rich R said that a decision needs to be made much sooner than January if the Summit Point events are to continue. Mary Anne F suggested adding autocrosses to supplement income, but we don't have any suitable venues. Rich R and Grace H said that making the track events PHA events would also not be feasible as PHA is not sanctioned to put on events.

**8. Nominations for Open Officer Positions:** Rick K asked each of the Officers if they were willing to rerun. These Officers were: President – Rich Rock; willing to rerun and seconded on the floor. Vice President – Trevor; willing to rerun and seconded. Secretary – Eli Sharp; willing to rerun and seconded. Treasurer – Grace Huntzinger; willing to rerun and seconded. No other nominations were offered. Rick K declared the slate complete and said that it will continue to be open until next meeting, where we will do the final nominations and a vote.

**9. Meeting Wrap Up and Next Meeting:** Rich R thanked everyone and reported that the next meeting date hasn't been set, but they are looking at January 27<sup>th</sup>. He asked for the dates of other key events like banquets in order to schedule without any conflicts. Eli S thanked everyone for their participation and for sticking to the rules. She also said that we will be sending a survey out to everyone in order to get feedback from people about the meetings.

The Critique Meeting was adjourned at 3:51pm.

Respectively submitted,

Eli Sharp  
PHA Secretary