

ETRC Board Meeting, Wednesday, 1/7/26 254 Babbs Road, Lenoir City, TN

Present from the Board: J. Michael Evans, Alan Bruhin, Karen Edwards, Michele Fletcher, Jim Pearce, Luke McCoy, Nathan Lamping, Kyle Griffin

Absent, Excused: Mike Smith (Wildlife volunteer work), Jeff Rader (work)

Absent, Unexcused: Bob Smith

Others Members Present: Lois

A quorum is 50% of the Board. Therefore, a quorum of the Board was met with 8 people present. The meeting was called to order at 6:54 p.m.

Officer's and AKC Delegate's Reports

President's Report:

Secretary's Report. Karen Edwards.

- **Minutes:** Last meeting was 9/25/25, our summer picnic/club trial. Minutes were approved by a majority of Board members and included in the October Newsletter and posted on the website. Alan moved that we dispense with reading the minutes out loud, and vote formal approval. Luke seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- **Membership:** Membership at the end of December 2025 was 67. Membership year ends 2/28/26; we already have a few renewals.
- **Correspondence:** bills for fall tests, insurance bill, tax filing bill (\$850), thank you letter from Frances Caldwell for our contribution towards their church music program in memory of Brian's dad. Also, request from Knoxville lawyer for help for a case of a guy who bought a lab puppy from a pet store, turns out it's not a purebred lab, paid \$5,000. What the attorney is looking for is someone who could testify about standard breeding practices, health clearances for parents, registration, and going rates for puppies. Karen has provided her with some links to AKC and Entry Express classified ads, the AKC and the Labrador Retriever breed club, etc. but she needs someone who is a Labrador breeder to provide a deposition or actually testify. She is looking to shut down the pet store and the puppy mill in Missouri that is the breeder, for fraud. After some discussion, there was not much interest in actually testifying and facing cross examination, although there was sympathy with the aims of shutting down the businesses that were committing fraud. There was also some general consensus that the client who bought the puppy without one minute of research was asking to be defrauded. Karen will respond to the attorney.
- **Treasurer's Report:**
 - **Calendar Year Finances:** current bank balance is \$40,266.71. We had a net loss last year of \$2,667.46, due to decreased profits from our hunt tests.
 - **Insurance:** Our basic liability policy went up to \$1000 (was \$900 last year). \$50 increase is a new thing that if you gross more than \$10k a year in your events, it costs an extra \$50, and the other is a basic rate increase.

- **Taxes:** dealt with IRS AI-generated confused notices about whether or not we have filed taxes for last several years. Copied office copies of short form returns, mailed to them along with computer proof of filing).

AKC Delegate's report: Michele, with additional info from Alan: AKC staff is considering recommending a Retriever Hunt Test Intermediate level (like our 'advanced Junior' club trial level) – where the dog would be required to do double land marks, double water marks, but no blind, walk-up or diversion bird or shot. This would probably be an additional title. This is not a slam dunk as it would require substantial additional resources for clubs to add another level, and this may not make it into a final recommendation. There is an addition \$1 per dog fee increase from AKC that is going to be effective this year, which will impact our bottom line. About 79% of Hunt Test judges have NOT taken or completed the required online course about child abuse. Original plans were to strike all non-compliant judges off the register as of January 1. If we lose 79% of our judges, this will have a massive impact on our ability to put on hunt tests.

During 2025, Field Trial entries were down 2.4% and Hunt Test entries were down 2.7%. This tracks our own experience last year, where for the first time in several years, our Master tests did not fill and Junior and Senior entries were lower than expected.

There is a recommendation going through the process of approval that if a dog is disqualified in either a hunt test or a field trial for attacking a person or another dog, that dog will be automatically disqualified for participation in the other sport.

A Rule Change was approved that all Retriever hunt test judges must fill out each cell of the score sheet with a numeric score. Clarity was added for Retriever Hunt Tests regarding a controlled break on the honor: the honor dog cannot interfere with the working dog.

For Retriever Hunt Tests, there will now be an option to award ribbons following a dog's final run provided it is clear they qualified. This is at the option of the club and the judges; even if the club is willing, the judges can override and say they prefer to wait. We will need to discuss whether or not, and under what circumstances, we would do this.

Not yet finalized, but probably will be soon, is language that says Master Level retrievers SHALL have at least one clean triple marking series in a 3-series test, and SHALL make continuous progress towards a blind retrieve.

Not discussed in the meeting, as it was only mentioned tangentially in the minutes of the September AKC Delegates meeting, was the big 2025 kerfuffle within AKC – 30 year president and CEO Dennis Sprung was fired, 15 other executive staff were fired, and AKC is refusing to discuss any reasons for any of this with the club delegates, citing 'privacy laws'. There is apparently discussion going on about a complete reorganization of AKC, making membership individual instead of being a 'club of clubs.' How this would impact us is pretty huge, and it's unfortunate that all of this is being done in secret. Also under apparent consideration is consolidation of all AKC functions into NYC, which of course would be massively cheaper than having many of the functions such as registration done in Raleigh, NC (Sarcasm font). If you google "AKC Reorganization 2025" there are lots of interesting facts and rumors going around.

Old Business

1. **Memorial for Joleen Lamping.** We will look at dedicating one of our hunt tests this year to her memory like we did for Roberta Williams a number of years ago.
2. **Winter Awards Banquet:**
 - a. **Location:** Reservations made for Saturday, Feb 21, 2026 at Bearden Banquet Hall. Alan provided Karen with the contract earlier this week; Karen will pay deposit and send it out tomorrow.
 - b. **Speaker,** Dr. Andrew Lewin – need to confirm and pin down details. J. Michael agreed to contact him and firm up the arrangements.
 - c. **Menu:** We decided to go with the same menu as last year, but made a note on the contract that the chicken tenders should be served as part of the meal and not as an appetizer.
 - d. **Election:** No changes during December, slate fixed: Alan President, J. Michael Past President, Brent Naveiro Vice President, Karen Secretary/Treasurer; Michele Hunt Test Secretary and AKC Representative, Jim returning and Lois a new board member replacing Jeff Rader whose term has expired.
 - e. **Door prizes:** we will have only 10-12 this year instead of a door prize for everyone who comes. Alan says he has a few Judges' gifts that he is willing to donate; we agreed to have two ETRC hats, two vouchers for ETRC tee shirts in whatever size needed, to be picked up at one of our hunt tests, and two "Free Entry to hunt test" vouchers.
 - f. **Guest Policy:** In the past we have permitted out of town guests free, if they are specifically assigned to a particular member. For people who are local, they should bring their membership forms and check or cash for dues to the banquet.
3. **Awards:** J. Michael asked everyone who had not submitted nominations for Member of the Year or AKC Sportsman of the Year to get those nominations in to him either tonight or tomorrow. He has not had much response so far. There are some title awards that have been submitted, but no puppy award nomination yet. Karen will send out another reminder in a few days.

New Business:

1. **New Members:** one for first reading and assignment of sponsors: Bobby & Judy Stogner. He's a banker. 1520 Markham Road, Knoxville, TN 37922, email bobbyrstogner@gmail.com, phone 865-250-0330. Will do 'whatever is needed', have a black lab puppy b. 6/11/25, interested in dog training, requests Alan Bruhin as one sponsor. Alan agreed to be one sponsor, and Nate Lamping will be the other.
2. **Status of Equipment:** Mike Smith sent an email reporting on a November work day at Brian's. Alan, Michele and Mike cleaned out and inventoried the 2 trailers. Mike repaired 11 blinds and trashed 2 old rebar type-blinds that were in sorry shape. They decided that Mike should order 2 more blinds which he has done and will submit the receipt to Karen for payment. Mike also repaired 3 zingers with parts purchased 2 years ago and depleted most of those parts. All equipment is in good order as are the trailers so we shouldn't have to spend a lot for the next few years except for more spare parts and rubber as needed. Our Chief Marshal Donna Smith has all the marshal boxes at her house and has restocked them as needed so they are ready to go for our first test.

3. **Set Schedule for the year:**

Hunt Tests. Alan and J. Michael recommended that we consider cutting back on our events this year, from 6 hunt tests to 4, with two of them being our old-style Spring and Fall tests, tentatively at Lucky 7, with double JH, double SH, and only one flight of MH considering that entries have been down some in Master. The other two tests will be Master Only tests, tentatively at Brian Caldwell's, although Lucky 7 is a possible option for at least one and Hiwassee may be an option for a fall date. J. Michael will discuss with Jason at TWRA about possible use of Hiwassee in the fall, but their schedule won't be available until early February. There was some discussion about having one Master Only test on the weekend, because of the problem of having nearby tests on weekends before and after, but in the end we decided to go with midweek dates for both.

After going through Entry Express to see dates this year and last for other nearby clubs, we settled on the following dates for our 2026 hunt tests:

- April 18-19, 2026, Weekend Spring hunt test, MH, 2JH, 2SH, Lucky 7
- May 19-20, Midweek Master Only at Brian's.
- September 15-16, Midweek Master Only at Brian's
- October 17-18, 2026, Fall Hunt Test, MH, 2JH, 2SH, Lucky 7 or possibly Hiwassee if L7 sells before then.

Michele will work with AKC to get dates confirmed that are not already 'ours' from using them last year. Michele texted Brian Caldwell who said he was fine with both of the dates where we tentatively have his place scheduled. J. Michael will talk with Ken Campbell to confirm those dates at Lucky 7. Alan and J. Michael will start calling judges. We are supposed to have judges' names submitted along with the request for dates, 4 months in advance, or face AKC fines. We are already late for our April test so that is the one to pin down first.

Club Trials. We agreed on having two this year. The second one will again be combined with our Summer Meeting.

- March 29, 2026, at Chuck Atchley's. J. Michael will contact Chuck to see if that's OK.
- September 6, 2026: possible location at Heath Shuler's new Loudon property? J. Michael will call Mike Osteen to discuss if this is a possibility. Other options are Brian Caldwell's or Lucky 7.

4. **Discussion on Finances:** do we want to consider making any changes on how we spend our money? Still doing well financially but we did lose money last year, after several years of steady income and outgo, following a few years when we had Quad JH/SH tests where we made quite a bit of extra money which improved our financial situation markedly.

Karen passed out a report on calendar year 2025, showing how our money was spent. Increased costs leading to our deficit spending for the year were primarily for restaurant judges' meals with helpers, which cost a total of \$2482.64; increased insurance fees (up from \$1,650 in 2024 to \$1,840 in 2025); and a new expense for a tax accountant since we have averaged more than \$50k gross over the past 3 years, which amounted to \$850. We decided to just keep going as we are, but keep an eye on it as we don't want to get back to the financial straits we were in back in 2011 when the club ran out of money altogether. We do want to continue to provide good money and good treatment to our judges, in order to make it easier to get them. As a side note on financial matters, Karen reminded everyone that expenses other than very nominal ones should be approved in advance by a vote of the board. We can always handle that via email voting in order not to delay buying things we need.

Any other New Business?

1. Alan mentioned that several club members had asked him if we were going to be putting on a judge's seminar this year. We had discussed doing this last year, and had decided to put it off till 2026. We decided it would be good to do this, possibly in the summer so there wouldn't be as much conflict with hunt tests and other clubs' judges' seminars. Alan will contact AKC about a date in July or August, for a basic judge's seminar which is usually one day, and will look at possible locations. In the past, we have used a hotel with a meeting room up in Strawberry Plains, and in Athens. Both of them were adequate for what we needed but others might work out as well.
2. Master National Judges: Alan asked if anyone knew someone from our region who might be willing to judge the Master National in Oregon this year. No one offered any suggestions.

Adjourn: There being no other new business, Jim moved that we adjourn. Nate seconded the motion which then passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Karen Edwards
ETRC Secretary/Treasurer

Changes:

1. J. Michael Evans, 1/9/26: Changed to clarify that passing out ribbons after a dog runs its final series is at the discretion of the judges as well. Even if the club chooses to do it, judges can override and say they prefer to wait.
2. Michele Fletcher, 1/9/26: Changed to correct that it was Michele who contacted Brian about using his place, not Luke. Also, J. Michael is going to reach out to Hiwassee in February just to see if it would be available for our fall test, if L7 were to sell.
- 3.

Approvals:

1. Michele Fletcher, 1/9/26
2. Jim Pearce, 1/10/26
3. Luke McCoy, 1/11/26
4. Alan Bruhin, 1/11/26
5. Nate Lamping, 1/11/26
6. Jeff Rader, 1/11/26
7. Karen Edwards, 1/11/26
8. Kyle Griffin 1/11/26

