ETRC Board Meeting, Wednesday, 11/4/26
254 Babbs Road, Lenoir City, TN

Present from the Board: Alan Bruhin, Karen Edwards, Michele Fletcher, Jim Pearce, Luke McCoy, Lois Luthenauer, plus Kyle Griffin & Brent Naveiro on the phone.

Absent, Excused: Nathan Lamping, Bob Smith, J. Michael Evans

Others Members Present:

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 6:45 p.m.

Officer's and AKC Delegate's Reports
President's Report:

Secretary's Report. Karen Edwards.

- **Minutes**: Last meeting was September 6, 2026, the summer general meeting / picnic. Minutes were approved by a majority of Board members, included in the October Newsletter, and posted on the website. Luke moved that we dispense with reading the minutes out loud, and vote formal approval. Lois seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

- **Membership:** Membership at the end of December 2025 was 67. Current membership is 65, with 1 for first reading today. 14 people did not renew from 2025.

- **Correspondence:** A request for donation from the AKC Humane Fund, and an invoice for our insurance policy for the Directors/Officers' policy.

- **Treasurer's Report*:***

    - **2025 Taxes**: Still not filed, although our CPA Jim Longest did file an extension back in the spring so we are legal. Followed up this morning, and his secretary said he is preparing now and will file by the end of the week. We will need to pay his bill -- $850 last year.
    - **Calendar Year Finances:** Balance on January 1 was $40,241.71. Current bank balance is $35,943.02. We are down $4,303.69 so far this year due to costs of banquet, losses on our first two hunt tests, and very modest profits on the other two hunt tests -- not enough to cover our operating expenses. Karen passed out a full report on all banking transactions to date, along with a summary of hunt test expenses & income. Notice that this summary uses computed costs for two items – ribbons used at each test, and lunch supplies used at each test, so there is some difference between the transaction report and the Hunt Test income-outgo reports.

      These reports do show, however, that last year we had no tests that lost money, and netted a little over $5,000 which represented 11% of the income from the tests. Even so, 2025 was also a money losing year overall, totaling about $5,000 over the course of the year. In 2026, two out of four of our tests lost money and the overall net income (with a few bills still outstanding) was just over $2,000 (6% of our income). As a result, although we are still in good financial shape, it might be time

to look at our finances and see if there are some areas where we can increase income and cut costs, in order to avoid losing all of our financial pad that enables us to put on so many events without worrying about paying our bills.

Jim moved that we accept the Treasurer's report. Lois seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

AKC Delegate's report: Michele, with additional info from Alan: Neither had anything to report. Nothing major dealing with hunt testing for retrievers was brought up in the last board meeting.

Old Business

1. ***Tests in 2026.*** Comments, problems noted, things we did well, things we can do better? In general, it seems like the tests ran smoothly and there were not many problems identified. One issue was the extreme heat in our September test, and although we have umbrellas for our bird techs who sit out in the sun all day, we have no umbrella stands to mount them on. Alan suggested that we use the technique used at the Master National this year – buy some of the inexpensive step-in plastic fence posts and use zip ties to fasten the umbrellas to them. This was acclaimed as a great and inexpensive idea, and Alan volunteered to pick up 10-12 before next hunt test season.

   Michele asked if we could get rid of the heavy metal signs that we inherited from our purchase of the field trial equipment from L7 several years ago. Alan said that Mike Smith had suggested he take them to a scrap metal yard and sell them for whatever we can get. Everyone thought this was a great idea as well; no point in these taking up space in the trailer and adding lots of weight.

2. ***Discussion on Finances:*** Listed below are a grab-bag of most of the ways we spend money (except on equipment), and we discussed each of them to decide if we wanted to make any changes now or not. Alan mentioned that some of our losses in the last two years may have been because of the location of the Master National out in the western areas, which reduced the number of people chasing 6 Master passes during the year and kept test numbers down for Master dogs. However, now that the MN will be in the Eastern half of the country over the next two years, he expects our numbers to rise. However, numbers in Junior and Senior continue to be low, as people who have already been through the entire process tend to skip at least Junior and often Senior as well, and go straight to Master tests in order to save some money in what is increasingly becoming an expensive sport to participate in. We reviewed some of the entry number on Entry Express, and in fact our low JH and SH numbers are in line with most other clubs in our area. Another consideration is that having a fairly local Master National means that the entire month of October is shot for putting on local tests. We will be forced to have our fall tests, if any, in early September (and possibly struggle with high heat) or early to mid November. Also, it means that the test dates available in the spring will be very crowded with other tests as all of them are having to front-load their seasons because conflict with the MN and the resulting lack of entries in any local fall tests.

   a. **Entry Fees**. We are not the most expensive, but we are not the cheapest either. And with the overall financial pressures including cost of fuel etc., we worry about people dropping out because of affordability issues. We raised our fees just a year or two ago. Do we want to discuss raising them again? AKC per-dog event fees have gone up substantially this year, from $3.50 to $4.50 per dog and will be going up to $5.50 per dog in January 2027. After some discussion, we decided to hold off on raising our fees (currently $90 / $100 /

$110) for at least the spring season, and possibly revisit this for any fall tests, depending on how we fare financially on the first several tests.

b. **Judges' Gifts**: we give each judge $250 whether they are judging a 66 dog Master, or are judging 5 Junior dogs one day and 6 Senior dogs the next. Some judges stick around and help with the Master test after the JH/SH tests are done, others leave the test grounds. Do we want to keep this the same, lower the amount for Senior and Junior, or institute some kind of sliding scale based on number of dogs entered?

Discussion immediately acknowledged that judging is a very hard job. Not only do you lose at least three days to a test, it is unremitting while the testing is going on. Junior / Senior judges still lose the three days whether they have large number of dogs or not in their stakes. We have been trying to use more member judges on the theory that this will cost less money in transportation fees, but these fees actually depend more on the vehicle the judge drives, and so there is less savings from that than you might expect. Jim moved that we give $100 to member judges rather than $250, and still of course pay for their motel room and meals and gas. Brent seconded the motion and it passed with no dissension. We will need to inform member judges of this change, though, so there are no unhappy surprises at the test if they have judged for us before.

c. **Entertainment fees**. We have been taking judges out for dinner at least one night, sometimes two, and other workers who choose to go along also get their meals and drinks paid for by the club. In the 4 hunt tests this year, we have spent:

- ***i.*** April: 6 judges, $255.54
- ***ii.*** May: 2 judges, $656.88
- ***iii.*** Sep: 2 judges, $650
- ***iv.*** Oct: 6 judges, $746.57

Obviously there is not much correlation between number of judges and cost of meals. The difference must be between number of workers who go along for free meals, and what is ordered. Restaurant bills usually aren't itemized, but we do have two receipts that had detailed summaries of what was ordered. In October, we paid for 10 meals on Friday night which included 6 judges and 4 other people, and 3 of the meals were $32 ribeyes. The other meals were 4 at $20 each, one at $14 and the other one at $15. The bar tab was $164, for an average cost per person of that meal of $52.54. The other itemized bill was last year, over $900, with a number of people ordering steaks and salmon meals and a hefty bar tab. These bills do not show whether it was workers or judges (or both) that ordered the expensive meals and drank the alcohol.

Note that the same workers are also eligible for one free hunt test entry per year under our current rules. Most of the workers don't end up going to these meals, which is fortunate for our bank account, nor do most workers take advantage of both a free entry and meals with the judges.

We had considerable discussion about this, and all agreed that we should not limit judges in what they pick to eat. There are also lots of practical difficulties in trying to figure out how to control these costs – but, this is probably the biggest area where we have unpredictable amounts that we spend, and in the May test, the cost for entertainment made up the difference between making and losing money on that test.

Jim moved that we change our system as follows: rather than one club member host picking up the entire tab, everyone, including the judges, pays for their own meals, and

then presents the receipt to Karen the next day or at the end of the test for reimbursement if they choose to. We make it clear that we will not reimburse alcoholic beverages. Luke seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

d. **One Free worker Entry**. Currently, we give one free entry to each member who works at least one full day at a hunt test. It is supposed to be used within a year of being earned. This year 5 people cashed in their free worker entry (2 others did as a doorprize, see below). This totaled $530, not including the door prizes.

Discussion centered on how to generally encourage and reward people for working, and on some fairness issues. We have many people who work but aren't running dogs that year (or ever), so they are not rewarded by this system. We have people running at higher and lower levels, so some get more reward than others. Generally, we know who works, but when we have multi-site tests that gets harder for Karen to know who has worked and who hasn't. We discussed the chief marshal passing out vouchers to people who have worked a full day, but didn't make any decisions about doing this or not. We discussed giving out a flat rate, maybe less than an entry ($50? $100?), and just making this in the form of a check maybe just one time a year.

Finally, we decided for now to leave the current system in place for next year

e. **Door prizes**. In the last several years, we have been giving vouchers for door prizes – last year we gave away 4 vouchers for a free tee shirt for $25 (which we have been honoring against more expensive items as just a $25 credit), and 2 door prizes of a free entry. All of these door prizes were cashed in this year for a total of $320, along with 2 tee shirt door prizes from earlier (but undated) for another $50. Do we want to keep these numbers the same, increase, decrease? Enforce our policy that they can only be used in the calendar year awarded (and make sure the vouchers state which year they are awarded)?

Discussion centered on presentation of door prizes, letting each person whose number is called getting to pick out what they want from those prizes still available, and whether or not we can get other door prizes – free Purina Pro Plan food vouchers, possibly one of the very nice ETRC jackets, etc. We will be having another meeting in January to finalize plans for the banquet, and decided to defer final decisions on that until then.

f. **Other freebies**: Not much of that this year, only one we know about this year was a $35 ETRC sweatshirt given to a judge for free. In the past we have given multiple tees, hats etc. to non-member workers but that seems to be mostly in the past. We agreed there shouldn't be this sort of giveaways.

g. **Club Test Entries**: for the last several years, we have given the first two entries free to members for entering their dogs in the club trials. This does reduce the amount of entry fees received, but also increases participation quite a bit. We still usually end up with some money in entry fees (see overall transaction report) and the only costs are ribbons. After a brief discussion, the general consensus was that this was not a big cost to the club and certainly was worth it for the increased attendance.

h. **Orange Ribbons**. Ribbons are going up in cost like everything else. Our ribbons that we ordered in 2026 are up from $7.35 each in 2025 to $8.11 and will probably be higher in 2027. Our ribbons are nice looking. We have reduced cost to some extent by only having writing on one of the streamers instead of all three. We could reduce costs more by going

to smaller ribbons and fewer fancy folds behind the medallion on the center. But, they don't look as nice. We are going to need a pretty big ribbon order this coming winter, we are very low on both Junior and Master ribbons. If we change, there are going to be issues with using up the current inventory and then going to cheaper-looking ribbons at the same test.

After a brief discussion, we decided to leave the ribbons as they are for now.

i. **Title ribbons**. We also give out title ribbons, which are less expensive than the big orange ribbons and many people have said that they very much appreciate them. We still have enough for next year so deciding now to not give them out any more is premature. The cost per ribbon of the ones we ordered last year, including the little tabs for JH, SH and MH, is $6.95 each. General consensus was to continue with title ribbons for now.

j. **Duck bands**. They are now $.35 each, up from $.19 two years ago. Some people really like them and others don't. Do we want to keep on ordering them, or just let them die out once we run out? Since they were so inexpensive, general consensus was to keep on getting them.

k. **Club ribbons**: many people turn these back in. New people really appreciate them. They are not terribly expensive (we get cheap ones) and we can order lots of mix-and-match ribbons with the same base cost and just line cost changes between the different colors/stakes they are awarded for. Last time we ordered ribbons (2023), the cost per was about $2.60 each. We will need to order some this year of the stakes ribbons; we only have 5 JH and 6 AJH ribbons left and are also low on Senior and Master. We have plenty of Singles Classic and a lifetime supply of puppy stakes ribbons (which are also given out at Hunt Tests where we offer puppy stakes at the big spring and fall tests).

General consensus was to keep on giving these out, especially as they are a nice incentive for people just starting out in the retriever game.

l. **Awards**. The club spent about ~$2,400 on awards last year. Do we want to look at ways of lessening this cost? Smaller plaques? (used to be smaller ones, about 4x6, for title awards, and the big plaques were reserved for MN passes and the two people awards). Different types of plaques? Framed paper award certificates? No decision was reached on changing any of our awards plaques. J. Michael, who handles the awards, was unable to attend so we had no information on sizes available and any cost savings that could possibly be gained from reducing any sizes.

Lois moved that we make no changes for the awards to be given out in February. Michele seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

m. **Awards Banquet**: not sure we can do much better than the Bearden Banquet Hall for any banquet where we pay for people's meals. We could go back to just reserving a room at a restaurant and everyone pays for themselves. Or we could just cut back on the menu items a bit and leave off the tenderloin.

After a brief discussion, we regretfully decided to not get tenderloin this year. The menu will be decided at our January meeting.

n. **Membership dues**. Dues have been $25 forever (at least since 2002, and possibly since our club's inception in 1986). The Bylaws give the Board the ability to raise the yearly

dues, but no higher than $50 so there is an upper limit without a Bylaws revision. If you go to the banquet, you have already gotten more than your dues from the club. If you get a plaque, likewise.

Our memberships are already family memberships, but only carry one vote. We do have a few married members, both currently and in the past, who have maintained separate memberships in order to be able for both to serve on the Board or as officers and still be in compliance with the Bylaws.

After some discussion, Luke moved we raise the dues, beginning in 2027, to $40 per individual/family membership. Jim seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. This change will need to be announced in the December and subsequent newsletters, with changes also made to the Facebook page and the website.

o. **Clarification/changes to scratch refunds**. As announced in each event premium, we give full refunds for people with scratches due to dog illness / injury / death, or bitch in season, but only with vet letters. We give partial refunds to people who have other worthy circumstances, where they explain the reason in writing and request a refund, and in this case the Board must approve the request and we retain $40 for administrative fees including the cost of ducks already purchased. This latter policy was instituted several years ago because of a guy whose wife had a medical emergency and was in the hospital. These scratch refunds were not intended for just "I decided to scratch, it was raining," or "my dog titled the day before." Also, not mentioned in the event premiums, the Board decided last year that one of our member perks is full scratch refunds without vet letters for members, or without having to go before the board for approval of other serious circumstances.

We have a pro member who has requested a refund for a non-member-owned dog that she handled on Saturday in the Junior test and the dog titled, so she scratched it on Sunday. Do we pay this under our premium-stated policy, which does not specify what kind of situations would merit Board consideration or approval, and vote on it? Or do we pay this under our member policy? We have paid member refunds for member-owned- nonmember pro- handled dogs in the past, but never the other way around.

Also, other clubs are charging admin fees for all scratches including those accompanied with vet letters, and are charging fees higher than $40 as Admin fees that they retain for all such cases. Do we want to change our policies on this?

First, we reached a general consensus that this particular refund request would not fall under our member perks policy, since the dog was not owned by the handler and presumably it was the owner that paid the fees and not the member handler.

Second, the discussion centered around whether our premium language is sufficiently clear that we don't just automatically grant board approval when asked, that scratch refunds in these cases (not requiring vet letters for certification) should be only for hardship situations, such as illness of the handler or a family member, being involved in a car wreck and missing the start of the test, etc. -- and not for a voluntary scratch such as it was raining, or too hot, or the dog titled the day before. There was disagreement on whether the current language requiring board approval meant that all requests would be automatically granted or not.

Luke moved that we (1) pay the refund in this case; (2) revise our premium language for next year to state that this was only for hardship situations, (3) we raise our administrative fees for next year to $50, and (4) we require any vet certificates or requests for Board approvals to be received within 3 days rather than 7.
Lois seconded the motion. The vote was 6 in favor, one against, and one abstention. The motion carried.

Michele, as hunt test secretary who is in charge of the premium language posted on Entry Express, was tasked with writing up proposed new language for presentation to the board for approval. She provided a draft later that night, as shown below. Approval of these minutes by the Board will constitute approval of the revised language:

Current:
Scratches after the draw may be eligible for full or partial refunds as follows. Full refund will be given for bitches in season, injury, illness or death of the dog with a signed veterinary statement naming the dog, owner and reason for the scratch. This vet statement must be received by the Hunt Test Secretary within seven (7) days of the test completion in order to be eligible for a refund. Dogs withdrawn for any other reason or dogs withdrawn without proper veterinary statement, will require a written statement of the reason for the scratch, ETRC Board approval and a $40 processing fee for each dog. No refunds for NO SHOWS!

Revised language:
Scratches after the draw may be eligible for full or partial refunds as follows. Full refund will be given for bitches in season, injury, illness or death of the dog with a signed veterinary statement naming the dog, owner and reason for the scratch. This vet statement must be received by the **Hunt Test Secretary** within three (3) days of the test completion to be eligible for a refund. Dogs withdrawn for any other hardship or dogs withdrawn without proper veterinary statement, must submit a written statement within three (3) days to the **Hunt Test Secretary** explaining the reason for the scratch. A partial refund may be issued with ETRC Board approval and a $50 processing fee for each dog. No refunds for NO SHOWS!

3. ***Winter Awards Banquet:*** Reservations been made for Saturday: Feb 20, 2027 at Bearden Banquet Hall. ETRC has not been billed yet for any reservation cost. We still need suggestions for a speaker if we are going to have one. And, we need to pick out the menu. We decided to discuss all these matters at a meeting in January.

New Business:

1. ***New Members:*** 1 for first reading and assignment of sponsors:
   a. Jeffery Hurst Jr. (JJ) & Victoria Hurst. Joined 9/17/26. Heat & air technician, 2792 Hillock Way, Strawberry Plains, TN 37871, email Outofsight16@AOL.com, 865-310-0061, volunteers for whatever is needed, hunt test setup, gunner, marshalling, training supplies, and “my wife”. Has a standard poodle, age 1. Interested in AKC hunt tests, dog training, club trials. He was at our September club trial. Lois and Jim agreed to be his sponsors.

Luke moved that we accept his application as a provisional member. Lois seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

2. ***Work day to repair and clean equipment.*** We need to get this done before our next events. Brent mentioned that when he drove the small trailer over to Lucky 7 for our last test, that there was a problem with the electrical pigtail and when he plugged it in, it caused all kinds of error messages on his truck. Karen mentioned that both trailers are super filthy (they are parked under a tree in their regular home), and it might be a good idea to get them washed. We decided not to set a date now, and push this off until possibly early to mid-March.

3. ***Discussion about schedule for next year, early thoughts? Set schedules for hunt tests?***

After much discussion and looking at the calendar for people availability and conflicts with other clubs' events, we tentatively decided on the following schedule for 2027 Hunt Tests:

a. April 3-4: Spring Hunt Test, double Master (66 dogs each), double Senior, double Junior. 8 judges (4 MH, 4 JH/SH). Hopefully at Lucky 7 if it hasn't been sold by then.
b. May 11-12: Midweek Master Only, 66 dogs, possibly at Mike Osteen's Pet Resorts at the Farm in Loudon County. 2 judges.
c. June 15-16-17, Midweek Master Only, 100 dogs, Brian Caldwell's. This is at Brian's suggestion. 2 judges.
d. November 5-6, Fall hunt test, double Master (66 dogs each), double Senior, double Junior. 8 judges (4 MH, 4 JH/SH). Hopefully at Lucky 7.

If Lucky 7 is unavailable, we might be able to do tests at Pet Resorts. It is 150 acres but there may not be enough ponds or wide enough separation between cleared areas to set up 4 full test sites. Michele will contact AKC with these dates and try to get approval.

Club Trials: we decided not to set specific dates for now, but will aim for one in March, possibly at Chuck Atchley's farm in Sevierville, and one in September, possibly back at Pet Resorts.

4. ***MNRC Stuff:***

a. Alan reported that the MNRC is soliciting nominations for judges for the 2027 Master National from our region. Judges must be experienced with at least 8 MH judging assignments in the past and preferably more. If anyone has suggestions, please provide them to Alan within the next week or so. Only one suggestion was made, but that person doesn't live in our region so is ineligible for us to nominate.
b. MNRC is also looking for nominations for Handler of the Year Award for 2026. This is centered on the 2026 Master National so should have participated, but also participation and sportsmanship at local qualifying events can be considered. We cannot nominate people who are on the MNRC Board. Nominations are due by November 11. Again, if anyone wants to make any suggestions, contact Alan.

5. ***Any Other New Business?***

Adjourn: There being no other new business, Jim moved that we adjourn. Luke seconded the motion which then passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Edwards

Karen Edwards
ETRC Secretary/Treasurer

Changes:

Approvals:

1. Lois Luthenauer, 11/7/26
2. Luke McCoy, 11/7/26
3. Michele Fletcher, 11/7/26
4. Kyle Griffin, 11/8/26
5. Jim Pearce, 11/11/26
6. Karen Edwards, 11/11/26