

Board of Directors Meeting Agenda
Saturday, April 26, 2025, 9:30 am – 4:00 pm
Westerner Park, Red Deer, Viewing Room 2nd floor

Our Mission

To assist in creating a positive environment for the enjoyment of equines. Through our leadership and proactive approach, we promote, facilitate and co-ordinate equestrian-related activities for Alberta.

Our 5-Year Goal

We are Alberta's most respected and trusted equine community with 30,000 members.

1. Call to Order

Jason called the meeting to order at 9:34 am and asked Claire to read the AEF Land Acknowledgement aloud. Jason also asked about any Board conflicts of interest. None heard.

Attending: Jason Edworthy (President), Jennifer Dimopoulos (Secretary), Brooke Hartwick (Treasurer), Pat Buffalo (Director – joined at approx. 10:00 am following appointment to Board), Cailin Kopetski (Director), Claire Goddard (Director), Kate Wood (Director), Louise Caplan (Director), Ally Penic (Director), Lindsay Seidel-Wassenaar (Director), Anne Stone (Director), Sonia Dantu (Executive Director, non-voting) and Flo Scherpenisse (Recording Secretary, non-voting)

Unable to Attend with Regrets: Sandy Bell (Past President)

The Board was informed of Alisa DiBenedetto and Edna Kaiser's resignation from the Board.

Guests: Mike King (ACERA Insurance – via Zoom)

2. Welcome and Introductions

Jason warmly welcomed new and returning Directors which was followed by brief roundtable introductions.

3. President's Address

In his President's address, Jason touched on the following topics:

- Tariffs: It is anticipated that the U.S. tariffs on Canada will have an impact on equestrian activities, resulting in some uncertainty. Also, no apparent issues identified related to the upcoming Canadian national election.
- Social License: Referenced a video under investigation of Olympic show jumper, Erynn Ballard, who was also named Equestrian Canada's (EC) 2024 Equestrian of the Year, repeatedly whipping her horse. This was particularly relevant in relation to AEF's rollout of its Safe Sport program in 2025.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): This aspect is especially pertinent when considering membership growth and is directly related to appointing Patrick to the Board.
- Recreation Task Force (TF): There are many opportunities for involvement with the recreation TF (i.e. Station Flats trail head and the Government of Alberta (GOA) trail manager for a select number of trails).
- Finance and Sustainability: AEF finances remain tight due to inflation. As ambassadors of the AEF, Board members are encouraged to share AEF social media posts.

4. Agenda – Motion to approve – April 26, 2025

Sonia suggested the following amendment to the April 26, 2025 meeting agenda order: #4 (Agenda – Motion to Approve April 26, 2025 meeting agenda), #5 (Minutes – Motion to Approve February 20, 2025), #3 President's Address and #6 Motion to appoint Patrick Buffalo for a one-year term.

MOTION: Brooke moved to approve the April 26, 2025 meeting agenda as amended. Cailin 2nd. In favor (10); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.

5. Minutes – Motion to approve – February 20, 2025

MOTION: Claire moved to approve the February 20, 2025 meeting minutes with no additions or amendments. Jennifer 2nd. In favor (10); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.

6. Motion to appoint Patrick Buffalo for a one-year term

MOTION: Kate moved to appoint Patrick Buffalo to the AEF Board for a one-year term.

Cailin 2nd. In favor (10); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.

7. Elections of the Executive

a) President Elect

Jason explained that the President Elect role was not filled in 2024 due to a change in the bylaws for 2025 whereby the term for this position would be decreased by one year from three years to two years. This bylaw change was applicable to all of the President's Suite roles including the President and Past President.

NOMINATION: From the floor, Kate nominated Jennifer for the role of President Elect. Jason called three (3) times for any other nominations for the role of President Elect. Hearing none, Jennifer graciously accepted the nomination.

Brooke 2nd. In favor (10); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Jennifer approved as President Elect by acclamation.

At approx. 10:00 am Patrick joined the Board and presented a brief biographical introduction to the Board.

b) Secretary

Jason asked for nominations for the role of Secretary since Jennifer (previous Secretary) was approved as President Elect. In 2023, Jennifer was elected to a three (3) year term in this role.

NOMINATION: From the floor, Lindsay nominated Ally for the role of Secretary. Jason called three (3) times for any other nominations for the role of Secretary. Hearing none, Ally graciously accepted the nomination.

Brooke 2nd. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Ally approved as Secretary by acclamation.

8. Board Member Orientation

Sonia provided the following update on Safe Sport:

- Most Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations (PTSOs) are mandated to adhere to Safe Sport policies. AEF's Safe Sport manual was completed and approved by the Board. GOA has also been made aware of the same.
- GOA has invested \$3M for third party handling of Safe Sport complaints starting in 2025. This was especially welcomed by AEF as funding to do so would likely have been an issue. Now, after a few small amendments reflecting this third party change to AEF's SS Policy manual, we can move forward. However, the question was raised about ongoing funding in subsequent years.
- Of note, the vast majority of Safe Sport complaints are covered under EC's Safe Sport policy.
- AEF's Safe Sport policy only covers AEF members.

Sonia delivered a Power Point presentation, "2025 Board of Directors Orientation" that provided a high-level overview of the AEF for new and current directors. This was particularly relevant in relation to the AEF's Code of Conduct and Ethics, and she also referred to recent bylaw changes that would allow the Board to remove a Board member if necessary. She emphasized that the AEF's role is to education, not regulate.

In her presentation, she covered the following topics:

- AEF's vision, mission, values, and social responsibilities (i.e. land acknowledgement, climate emergency statement and equine welfare position statement) in relation to social license. The AEF was established in 1978.
- AEF's strategic priorities, structure, board composition, standing committees (i.e. executive, board governance and development, finance, and risk, as well as nominations) and ad hoc TF (i.e. scholarships

and awards, recreation, industry, and the equine emergency disaster fund) were outlined. In short, the AEF reports to the membership.

- As a registered non-profit organization dedicated to a specific social cause, civic improvement, pleasure and sport recreation, the AEF does not generate a profit. However, the AEF is also not a charitable organization.
- As a non-profit organization under the Society's Act, the AEF is able issue a donation receipt through the GOA (Government of Alberta) for income tax purposes. Donation-related inquiries are to be referred to Sonia and the AEF office.
- Role of the AEF's office team, Board of Directors responsibilities, Director engagement, Director Essentials (i.e. AEF BOD portal, required reading and understanding of critical duties, Code of Conduct, Ethics and Conflict of Interest), AEF focus areas (i.e. sport programs and services, recreation, education, and industry), programs and services and membership benefits were briefly touched on.
- Overview of the Executive Director's role was outlined, which included the areas of responsibility such as Board support, financial management, human resources management, along with programs and services.
- The following important AEF relationships were highlighted:
 - (i) AEF's Relationship with SPAR (Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Branch) which is under the GOA Ministry of Tourism and Sport: AEF is in the top 4/ 84 sport organizations in Alberta and is the only recognized governing body for equestrian sport in Alberta.
 - (ii) AEF's Relationship with EC (Equestrian Canada): AEF is not a division of EC. EC is recognized as the national governing body for equestrian sport. EC delivers national equestrian programs such as the National Coaching Program (NCCP) and EC competitions (i.e. Learn to Ride).
 - (iii) Other Partnerships and Agreements: These include Equine Guelph, ACERA Insurance, Horse Expo, Navigate Benefit Solutions, and others.

9. Member & Director Insurance (via zoom)

Mike presented a brief bio and provided a brief presentation, "*Provincial Equine Association Program*," and highlighted the following points:

- ACERA (previously Capri CMW) is one of Canada's largest, independent, employee-controlled insurance brokerage and has been working with AEF for over 27 years.
- Coverage for AEF: Includes insurance on property, Commercial General Liability insurance for all operations, Director, and Officer Liability and Cyber Liability insurance. Cyber risks are becoming increasingly prevalent.
- Additional Coverage Options Available: Includes liability (personal, commercial, professional property (i.e. coaches, clubs PTSO, farms) and horses (mortality and medical - Equicare).
- Value of AEF Membership: Provides automatic insurance. Includes government advocacy between the individual member and the government (i.e. during COVID), access and affiliation to the broader equine community in Alberta and access to provincial equine educational resources.
- Current Member Insurance: Includes \$5M limit in personal liability insurance anywhere in the world.
- \$40,000.00 AD & D (accidental death and dismemberment) insurance which also includes to and from equine events, as well as access to additional member insurance options (i.e. horse mortality/ medical, tack, increased AD & D and weekly accident indemnity).
- Directors and Officer's Liability: Includes \$1M, \$2M or \$5M options offered, covers "wrongful acts" while acting in an official capacity on behalf of AEF.
- Other liability insurance types were also presented (i.e. club/ association insurance and coach liability insurance)

Questions/ comments from the floor: No questions from the floor. It was noted that AEF has a partnership agreement with ACERA insurance.

10. March 31, 2025, Financial Statements

a) Financials – Best Practices

Brooke provided a high-level presentation on "*Strong Financial Practices*" which touched on the following points:

- Why Financial Health Matters?: (i) Sustainability as a mission-driven organization; (ii) trust and transparency with stakeholders; (iii) legal compliance and accountability and (iv) operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- Explanation of Core Financial Statements: (i) Balance Sheet: Provides a snapshot of the AEF's financial position; (ii) Income Statement: Indicates how much the AEF has earned/ spent; (iii) Cash Flow Statement: Indicates liquidity to operate efficiently (timing is key). Emphasized that non-profits should maintain a 3–6-month operational reserve.
- Key Financial Metrics: (i) Current Ratio: Indicates the ability to meet short term obligations. Current assets over current liabilities. Goal ≥ 1.0 ; (ii) Cash Reserves; (iii) Revenue to Date: Goal ≥ 1.0 .
- Implication of Tariffs: 2 possible impacts – (i) Actual tariffs imposed by the U.S. on Canadian goods and (ii) retaliatory tariffs resulting in increased costs and pressure on budgets and program delivery. Consider possible solutions such as considering Canadian suppliers, building space in budgets for anticipated increase in costs, seeking grant and donor support proactively and keeping stakeholders and especially members informed of developments.
- Role of Board in AEF Finances: Board to provide oversight and financial governance.
- Key Takeaway: Since 2020, the AEF has operated in a net negative deficit year-over-year. The concern raised is that while this was recommended by the accountant to draw down cash reserves, there is potential difficulty in meeting that 3–6-month operational reserve and the AEF's ability to meet short term financial obligations. In short, the AEF is in poor financial health with the 2025 forecast indicating continued deficit of up to -\$30,296.90.

Brooke provided a very brief overview of the Comparative Income Statement (as of March 31, 2025) and mentioned the following areas:

Revenue:

- Grant & Casino Revenue: Funds are recognized in the budget when expended.
- Membership Revenue: Most membership revenue is received in Q1, but some revenue expected throughout the year.
- Recreation Revenue: As expected.
- Education Revenue: Has been adjusted.
- Sport Revenue: Anticipated to increase as the season gets underway with shows and competition.
- Sales Revenue: Alberta Bits decreased to 3 annual issues (vs. 4 issues annually previously).

Expenses:

- Administrative Expenses: As expected.
- Sport Expenses: Expected to increase as the season gets underway.

Questions from the Floor: No questions from the floor.

MOTION: Jennifer moved to approve the March 31, 2025 Income Statement and Comparative Balance Sheet as previously circulated and as presented.

Claire 2nd. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.

11. New Business & Business Arising

a) Vision and Mission Statements – Final Review

Jason requested that the Board make final selections with regards to the previously circulated draft vs. alternate vision, mission and 5-year goal statements. The Board selected the following:

Vision: United by our passion for equines, we foster an inclusive community where everyone thrives together.

Mission: AEF supports Alberta's equine community through programs, education, and resources that promote horse welfare, sustainability, and meaningful connections among members.

5-year Goal: By 2030, AEF will strengthen its financial foundation by growing revenue streams, increasing membership value, and establishing reserves to support future programs and community initiatives.

MOTION: Ailly moved to accept the revised vision, mission and 5-year goal statements as discussed.

Brooke 2nd. In favor (11); Against (0); Abstain (0). Unanimous. Approved.

b) Meet a Horse Concept

Louise provided an update on this proposed pilot project to provide opportunities for individuals with no previous equestrian experience to be introduced to equines and equestrian sport. Even though this initiative is aligned with the AEF's strategic plan, concerns have been raised related to a possible venue, liability, and logistics. At this time, possible solutions presented included partnering with (i) therapeutic riding associations and/ or (ii) veterinary schools. The latter option has shown interest through their outreach program. However, questions were raised with regards to costs, timing, and the possibility of implementation of this project in 2026 when the AEF's financial concerns are not in the forefront. Further discussion to follow at the June Board meeting. Lindsay and Jennifer to assist Louise in the development of this ongoing endeavor.

c) Canadian Products

Previously mentioned in Treasurer's Report.

d) Social License/Equine Welfare

Previously mentioned in President's Address and Board member orientation presentation.

12. Committee/Task Forces

Jason encouraged all Board members to consider participation in the AEF's various committees and TFs and highlighted the following:

Industry TF: To also monitor tariff situation with the U.S.

Disaster Relieve Funding TF: This is particularly relevant as wildfire season is starting.

Recreation TF: AEF was not awarded the \$1M GOA grant due to a lack of experience as trail managers per se.

Moving forward, as a possible solution, Kelsey Nolan (Chair of Rec TF) is in the process of finalizing a proposal to manage select trails in the Panther Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ) with the intention of asking the GOA for \$25,000.00 in discretionary funds to implement this initiative.

ACTION: Sonia to circulate an updated Committee List to all Board members to sign up, prior to the next board meeting.

13. Board Development Ideas (for the future)

Kate suggested that of late, given the typical content-rich nature of Board meeting agendas, it has been challenging to develop educational activities/ presentations for the Board. A further suggestion was made that in future, when there are gaps in meeting agendas, this initiative could be revisited, but until then, to postpone Board development brainstorming ideas for the time being.

14. Adjournment

Jason inquired about any final questions or comments from the floor. None noted. Jason thanked all meeting attendees for their engagement and participation.

MOTION: Brooke moved to adjourn the meeting and adjourned the meeting at 3:40 pm.

2025/2026 Board Meeting/Event Dates

NOTE: Meetings are subject to change due to inclement weather and/or the urgency of issues. As much notice as possible will be provided.

June 19, 2025	6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Board Meeting, Zoom
September 20, 2025	9:30 am – 4 pm	In Person, Calgary - TBD
November 6, 2025	6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Board Meeting, Zoom

February 19, 2026
March 5, 2026

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
6:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Board Meeting, Zoom
AEF AGM, Zoom

Land Acknowledgement

The Alberta Equestrian Federation humbly acknowledges that what we call Alberta is the traditional and ancestral territory of many diverse original peoples, who have lived on these lands for generations. As we make our own footprints and hoofprints, we recognize those who have cared for these lands for centuries. We are grateful to live upon this territory together. We pay respect to the Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We are thankful to learn from all the original peoples of these lands as we move forward together in reconciliation.

Summary of the Board of Directors Code of Conduct

(Full policy available on pages 15 & 16 of the Board Policy Manual)

The AEF Board of Directors is committed to upholding the highest standards of accountability, integrity, and respect. Directors are expected to:

- Act with impartiality, professionalism, and in the best interests of the Federation.
- Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest and disclose any potential conflicts.
- Maintain confidentiality and comply with all legal and ethical obligations.
- Foster a respectful, safe, and inclusive environment free from discrimination or harassment.
- Refrain from using their position for personal gain or speaking on behalf of the Federation unless authorized.