

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF  
EQUINE DISTANCE RIDING ASSOCIATION  
Zoom Meeting September 3, 2020**

Pursuant to notice, the special meeting of Equine Distance Riding Association was held via Online Zoom Meeting on September 3, 2020. At 7:03 p.m. PST President Terry James called the meeting to order. Directors present were Susan Summers, Sandy Cheek, Julie Barnfather, Margie Thorngren and Kathleen Pillo. Quorum was achieved. Absent was Georgia Glidden. Guests were Sophia McKee, Max Merlich, Jennifer Kaplan, Kevin Eichorn, and Jilliane Baros.

Terry started the meeting with clarifying that this Board of Directors meeting is for the Board to listen to members comments that asked to speak. Sophia McKee attended to moderate between the members that requested to speak.

Sophia started out by outlining the results of the survey results. A few key points she pointed out were the following:

Overwhelming majority is that members feel EDRA is doing a very good job being welcoming.

Most everyone is supportive of the Mary & Anna Youth Scholarship

Youth of color scholarship had mixed responses as to the administration of the program.

Comments regarding the Open Letter from the President, some people commented that they joined EDRA due to the letter and others commented that they were leaving EDRA because of it.

Sophia then summarized by stating that the group is in agreement that EDRA is already welcoming and that others think there are things that EDRA can do to be better.

Each member that requested to speak had two minutes to make their statement to share their thoughts.

**Max Merlich**

Max started by saying that he has never experienced racism at any EDRA rides since the very beginning. He talked to others who also said they hadn't experienced racism at EDRA rides. Max mentioned that when national politics were brought into the organization (this is defined by also stating that racism is a hot national political topic right now), EDRA lost Kathleen Ferguson, Jo Weinstein, Tiffany Boub and will potentially lose more over it. He also said that over the past weekend at the Mary & Anna Memorial ride it was the first time he had experienced hostility at ride camp, especially directed at him. Max feels that EDRA's mission statement was sufficient as it includes all. Since the letter has come out Max feels that things have changed and he just wants the club to go back to being about just horses and riding horses and to leave out politics.

## **Jennifer Kaplan**

Jennifer summarizes the things that caused EDRA to be founded and all of the good it has done so far. The mentorship program, improvement of horsemanship, education of members, getting AERC to look closer at mileage inaccuracies, paving the way for other new endurance organizations like WDRA and sponsorship of youth. She states that EDRA has room to grow and that while its not a perfect organization she loves what it stands for. Jennifer states that change is difficult for people and that boldly walking into the future is huge. She then questions that if people really did only want to sit back and ride their horses with no political involvement there should not be any blow back from the letter at all. Jennifer admits she has white privilege, it was a hard conclusion for her to come too. This does not mean she needs to feel guilty about it, just that due to being white she had more opportunities than her friends of color. Jennifer then goes on to say that the good thing about white privilege is that it can be used to start turning things around and hopefully the next generation will be balanced and fair. It will take a long time, but why not start with something as simple as a scholarship for youth of color. Jennifer asks that EDRA be leaders and strive to be the most inclusive and forward-thinking horse organization out there. She encourages that the Youth of Color Scholarship come to fruition and that if some members don't agree with it, they do not hinder those that do support it, donating to it.

## **Kevin Eichorn**

Kevin admits he's not particularly active in EDRA, but that he greatly appreciates the people who have worked very hard for it. He points out that no one likes to talk about racism and its uncomfortable and exhausting to do so but is necessary. Kevin also said that the majority of people participating in equestrian sports, particularly endurance are dropping. Most of the people are white and middle aged, which is not a recipe for longevity. Kevin then goes on to question why some people feel the need to block an outreach or scholarship program that can only add to the participation and longevity of the sport. The Youth of Color Scholarship program sends a great message, that EDRA is open to everyone. He points out that if you don't want to you don't have to donate to it.

## **Jiliane Baros**

Jilane started out by saying that most of what she was going to say has already been stated, however her background is in education, marginalization and research, she is happy to volunteer and wants to put her money where her mouth is. Jilane is one of the people that joined EDRA due to the letter and will personally do everything she can to recruit members to help fill in for those that have left the organization over the letter. Jilane said that so far most people have been very welcome, and that people are willing to be educated on these issues. She then goes on to caution that being welcoming is not just about experiences at ride camp, but what people say on Facebook, emails and behind the scenes. These things all get out and people are making decisions to not go to rides based upon them. Jilane then states that it is on EDRA to assume those issues are there, because our group reflects society. EDRA needs to be proactive for those people that are there and say "we are here, we see you".

Sophia thanked the speakers for sharing their positions and that they have all given the Board lots to think about.

The Board then thanked Sophia for moderating. Terry then opened the group up for any additional comments.

## **Kathleen Pilo had comments for the founders of EDRA.**

“Why was EDRA created?”

Several Founding Members were upset with the direction of AERC for various reasons and wanted to “speak with their feet” over years of feeling that their voices were not being heard after repeatedly voicing concerns over various issues within AERC.

Founding members who came up with the idea of EDRA understood it would be hard. They understood people would be upset. They were accused of “tearing PNER apart” yet they proceeded down the difficult path because they had a vision. They knew our rides would be less well attended. They knew it would be expensive. They then asked us for our help, and we have stepped up and supported them. Many of us are riders with less history and experience in the sport. Therefore, we had less to no issues or bad feelings towards any of the sanctioning organizations in the USA. We decided to support our friends and their impassioned feelings and vision. We have had our founding members backs! We have traveled as far as Montana and Arizona with our horses to support our founders and their vision. We have written letters, taken on managing rides and sanctioning them with EDRA, we have sat on the board, we have ran for president, we have ran for positions in PNER to help keep relations between PNER members who ride both EDRA and AERC or just one or the other. We have signed up to be mentored and we have offered to be mentors. We have stood for our founding members as Some have been VERY upset with AERC, other members of PNER, and as recently as August 2019 were in very heated arguments with people in the PNER community. Our founders not getting along with each other and being involved with strife in PNER has made it difficult on those of us who have been trying very hard to keep a positive attitude and look towards the future. I feel you have asked us to stand by you in your fight. NOW, I ask you, founding members to support us as we do our best to grow the organization in the vision that was created in 2016/17.

This last weekend 7 EDRA founding members participated in the EDRA ride (I am including ride management as participants). 3 Rode (Guy, Lois, and Julie) 1 paid but could not attend due to injury (Sandy Cheek) and 3 were involved in managing the ride (Darlene, Max, and Carol). 11 founding members did not support the ride.

The EDRA board was represented by Georgia, Kathleen Pillo, Sandy Cheek, and Julie Barnfather (Nicole Mayfield, Brian Gidden, Guy Cheek, and Tim Pillo all supported the ride, their wives, mothers, and daughters on the board).

EDRA Founding members who rode the AERC ride and not EDRA: 3

Kathleen Ferguson

Layne Lewis

Ron Sproat

Beginning in 2017 – 2019 When we were asked to get involved and encouraged to become members of the board, we did not do so under the assumption that we were figure heads placed onto board positions that would always parrot the opinions of others. We felt our different and unique perspectives individual to each of us would bring value to the organization.

I now personally would like to ask the founding members to reexamine their goals and commitment to one another. Has it become too hard, or not fitting in with your goals, or no longer a priority? I get it if it is and I respect any desire to step back and reevaluate.

With approximately 120 riders at the Saturday AERC ride, ride entries would have totaled approximately \$13,800.

With 40 at EDRA Sunday ride entries would have been about \$4,600. The AERC ride brought in 9K more to ride management (which they 100% deserve, good for them I am happy it is hard work putting on rides I want them to not lose money). The financial implications of this are huge for ride managers on a shoestring. A powerful motivator maybe making founders that are RM's think it is someone else's turn to manage EDRA rides and take on the challenges of lower turnout due to smaller organization.

Some founding members might be looking for more competition. Horses are expensive and a lot of work! If you have a horse, you have brought up and he / she is getting really good maybe you want to test him against larger fields. That is GREAT I understand, do what makes you happy. Maybe you miss some of your friends who do not attend EDRA rides. I get it! That's OK.

I would be happy for the EDRA founders (a group I am not part of) to get together and get on the same page. Reevaluate where you are at and what you feel you can or cannot contribute anymore to our organization. After you work out any issues among yourselves, I hope you can support the current and future boards of EDRA. Please give the current and future boards the respect that they have given you and have their backs like we have had yours since the club's inception in 2016. Remember the good times, forgive the bad, and look forward to the future."

## **Conclusion**

Terry asked for any further discussion. He thanked everyone for attending and sharing their thoughts and opened the floor for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Margie moved to adjourn at 7:43 pm PST. Kathleen Pilo seconded.