

USA Climbing Board of Directors

Meeting Minutes

Saturday, October 25, 2025

Sunday, October 26, 2025

9:07 a.m. (In Person/Hybrid, Raleigh, North Carolina)



ATTENDING

Voting Board Members

Kate Felsen Di Pietro, Chair
Meagan Martin, Athlete
Trace Harris, Treasurer
Maureen Beck, Athlete
Sophia Curcio, AAC Rep

Bret Johnston
Connie Lightner
Joey Molko
Steve Struthers
David Landman
Deana Labriola
Brian McAndrews

Non-Voting Ex Officio Board Members

Marc Norman, President & CEO
Nekaia Sanders, Team USA AC Alternate

Observers

Danny Popowski, USAC AC Chair
Patti Rube

USA Climbing Staff and Others in Attendance

Sharlee Strebel, Membership and Compliance Director (Secretary); Caitlin Curry, CFO, John Muse, Chief of Sport; Stephanie Dooper, Development Director, Patrick Bodnar, Marketing Director, Zack Di Cristino, Medical Manager

The meeting commenced on Saturday October 25th, at 9:07 AM EST. Kate Felsen Di Pietro presided. Sharlee Strebel served as Secretary.

- I. Kate Felsen Di Pietro called the meeting to order.
 - a. The meeting agenda was reviewed for any conflicts of interest, and applicable Directors who also serve on IFSC Commissions noted such service to the Board.
 - b. *A motion and a second was made to approve the August 20th, 2025 Board Meeting minutes as presented. The minutes were approved by the Directors present. Deana Labriola and Brian McAndrews Abstained, as they were not present at the August 20 meeting.*
 - c. The group acknowledged USAC's increased US Representation at the IFSC.
 - d. The group congratulated Jason and Bret on the birth of their babies.
 - e. The 2026 Board meeting schedule was presented, along with the next in person board meeting aligning with Para climbing Nationals in Houston, Texas.

II. Committee Matters.

1. Governance Committee.

The Chair of the Governance Committee, Steve Struthers, presented the proposed Spectator Code of Conduct.

- a. *A motion and a second was made to approve the Spectator Code of Conduct policy as presented. The Spectator Code of Conduct policy was unanimously approved.*

Struthers then presented the proposed Staff/Volunteer Expression Policy to the Board, who discussed balancing the need for neutrality and professionalism while allowing individual expression. Various topics were covered related to the proposed Expression Policy, including perceptions of organizational endorsement, restrictions on specific items of expression and inclusion of an attire policy. The Board did not come to consensus on such matters, and the Governance Committee agreed to take feedback from the meeting to revise the draft Expression Policy for the next Board meeting.

2. **Nominating Committee.**

USAC Staff Liaison to the Nominating Committee, Sharlee Strebel, reported that all non-athlete positions for the Board and Board Committees are currently filled. In accordance with USOPC audit findings, efforts continue to ensure that athlete representation on the Board and all committees meets the required 33.3% threshold. The Board discussed options for addressing inactive committees, including the potential for dissolution or an amendment to USAC's charter. Governance Chair Steve Struthers informed the Board of the open athlete position to replace Danny Popowski on the Audit and Compensation Committee had not been filled, and no athlete candidates volunteered for such position. In light of same, the Board voted to align Danny's current term length with his original appointment, thereby extending his term through the end of 2026. Sharlee also presented updates on key volunteer discounts.

- a. *A motion and a second was made, the Board approved Danny Popowski to continue on the Audit and Compensation Committee through 12/31/26.*

3. **CEO Update.**

a. **Staffing Updates**

CEO Marc Norman provided an update on recent staff changes, expressing appreciation for Mason Sorey's contributions during his tenure as Event Manager and welcoming Caden Reedy to the role of Event Coordinator. Marc also informed the group of an open position for Development Coordinator.

b. **Partnerships**

CEO Marc Norman presented to the group that Yeti's sponsorship will be decreasing but VIK will increase for 2026. The group discussed the North Face partnership and updates were provided on other key partnerships that were in development.

c. **Strategic Plan**

The group discussed the Strategic plan, noting its professional presentation and measurable goals.

d. Impact Report

CEO Marc Norman presented updates on USAC's Impact Report, focusing on clarifying its core message, purpose, and objectives. Marc emphasized that the report is intended to (i) tell the organization's story, (ii) highlight developments within the sport, and (iii) serve as a valuable tool for donors and sponsors by showcasing athlete achievements and key statistics. The Board discussed the possibility of including a section to the report on youth climbers to represent the broader membership base. Additional discussion centered on incorporating Qualification Event (QE) earnings and ensuring the report's accuracy to support fundraising efforts by the Development Director.

e. 2026 Event Calendar

CEO Marc Norman presented the 2026 Event Calendar to the group.

III. Marketing and Communications Update

The group discussed the "Climb with the Pros" event at Triangle Rock Club that occurred the night prior to the meeting. Patrick Bodnar, Director of Marketing and Communications, then provided updates on web and email content, noting that USA Climbing has received 1.9 million website views in 2025, driven largely by reporting and news coverage. Email communications reached 31,000 subscribers and included targeted messaging for members and partner communications.

Patrick highlighted that gym partners now receive a 40% discount on YETI products and shared a social media update, noting increased engagement compared to 2023, particularly on Instagram. Positive feedback was given regarding the efficiency of having the training center and offices located together.

Event promotion was also reviewed, noting that the spectator budget was exceeded, and event streaming continues to grow. The group discussed a potential merchandise partnership which could offer new cobranded partner products, event-specific online storefronts, flexible revenue share and member discount options.

Additionally, the group explored strategies to educate new members on the various events available to such members. Patrick also presented upcoming plans for increasing collaborations with partners and athletes, storytelling around USA Climbing's mission and impact, and providing Board members with shareable content. The marketing team emphasized the importance of better educating potential members on how and why to join the organization.

IV. FY25 Financials

CFO Caitlin Curry presented a financial update for FY25. Caitlin highlighted that the FY24 990s and audited financials are now posted on the website, and presented the FY25 year-end

forecast and current cash balances. The current projections show the organization on track to meet or outperform the budget in FY25.

V. FY26 Budget

CFO Caitlin Curry reviewed USA Climbing's FY26 overall budget, financial structure, and strategic funding priorities across multiple entities—including the National Training Center, USA Climbing, and the Foundation. Caitlin presented the FY26 USA Climbing operational budget framework, outlining its five key categories: General Operations, High Performance, Events, Education, and Marketing. She also reviewed major FY26 budget assumptions, and provided year-over-year comparisons of revenue and expenses, and new staffing budgeted for the upcoming fiscal year.

The discussion concluded with the CFO's commitment to review the FY26 budget for accuracy and further refinement, and to identify additional cost-saving and revenue opportunities for the organization, with the goal of presenting a final FY26 budget to the Board for approval in December.

VI. Competition Eligibility Policy (aka TAPP)

The group discussed the refinement of the current Competition Eligibility Policy, with particular attention to issues of confidentiality, the grievance process, and the female categories in light of current law. The board approved the presented policy with contingencies. A sub-committee of Board members was formed to finalize the policy, including review by medical experts and legal counsel before being formally adopted.

A motion and a second was made to approve the Competition Eligibility Policy with contingencies. The Competition Eligibility policy was approved. Connie Lightner abstained.

VII. FY26 Performance Indicators and Strategic Initiatives

CEO Marc Norman presented his outline of the 2026 organizational performance indicators and strategic initiatives for the organization, including the need for a post-season recap and continued tracking of key metrics such as volunteer retention, new coaches added, and member satisfaction. The group discussed expanding climbing opportunities in schools through an elementary pilot program, as well as exploring legislation to support the development of school climbing walls. Marc emphasized the importance of developing regional training sites and increasing engagement with gym partners through joint committee work, gym-owner town halls, and enhanced membership programs. The CEO highlighted goals to advance sponsorship development, including submitting 12 partner proposals, implementing a coach summit, and strengthening volunteer recognition efforts.

VIII. National Training Center

CEO Marc Norman presented an update on the National Training Center (NTC), including ongoing construction updates, cost considerations related to historic building restoration, and current fundraising efforts. CFO Caitlin Curry further reported that the project cost is capped and value-engineering efforts are underway. The current construction plan has been submitted

to the City of Salt Lake for Design Review, a process expected to take four to six months, and key approval and check-in dates for such process were reviewed by the Board.

Marc reported on the organization's current capital campaign commitments for the NTC, with a recommended threshold of at least \$45M/\$50M secured before construction should begin. The team discussed strategies to secure a lead gift, refine proposals for prospective donors, and address considerations related to donor anonymity and naming rights. Stephanie Dooper, Development Director, presented top naming opportunities and plans for donor outreach. Concerns about rising project costs were discussed and the Board reviewed examples of gift-recognition materials, and the likely donor pool to secure such commitments.

Meeting adjourned and went into closed session at 4:27pm EDT

The meeting commenced on Sunday October 26th, at 8:45 AM EDT. Kate Felsen Di Pietro presided. Sharlee Strebel served as Secretary.

I. Kate Felsen Di Pietro called the meeting to order and welcomed the Board back for day two.

II. Road to LA

a. LA Games Activity Update

CEO Marc Norman presented opportunities related to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Marc emphasized the importance of growing awareness and participation in climbing across the U.S., capitalizing on the visibility provided by it being Home Games for the U.S., and ensuring strong American representation within the LA Olympic Committee. He reviewed upcoming event plans, including hosting a Boulder World Cup in Salt Lake City in 2026 and pursuing two World Cups in 2027—one in Southern Utah and one in Long Beach – in advance of the Games. Marc also highlighted potential Games-related activations for 2028, including hosting the General Assembly in Long Beach and exploring the concept of a "Climbing House," a mixed-use space for athletes, families, spectators, and sponsors designed to elevate the sport's presence during the Games.

b. LA28 Olympic Sponsorship Packages

CEO Marc Norman provided an overview of the potential Olympic sponsorship packages and the benefits associated with each.

III. Foundation Update

Development Director Stephanie Dooper presented an update on the Foundation and its activities, including the upcoming rollout of Impact Circles—Summit Circle, Ascent Circle, Insiders Circle, and 100 Women for Climbing. She outlined the giving tiers and goals for growth, noting that the Summit Circle includes an annual \$25,000 gift. Patti Rube, Foundation Chair, provided additional context on the 100 Women for Climbing program, including its restricted-fund structure and its success in building personal engagement through programming.

Stephanie shared that the Impact Circles are in a soft-launch phase, with a full launch planned in the coming months, and described the need to staff a development coordinator to manage member benefits. She also highlighted the new CRM system, which provides enhanced donor-

tracking and prospect-analysis capabilities. The database currently includes more than 10,000 constituents, with over 1,200 identified as having strong giving capacity and interest.

The team discussed regional fundraising priorities—particularly New York, Washington D.C., and the Bay Area—and the importance of strengthening relationships in these markets to increase major-gift support. Board member Trace Harris noted opportunities tied to training centers and reinforced the need for continued investment in fundraising personnel to support long-term revenue growth.

V. Sport Update

Chief of Sport John Muse reviewed the 2026 Resource Allocation Dossier with the group, including USOPC funding of \$940,000 for Olympic programs and \$450,000 for Paralympic programs, along with DAS support. He noted continued growth in para climbing resources and the need to balance high-performance funding with broader organizational priorities.

John outlined the 2026 High Performance plan, which includes increased athlete support, additional staffing, and prize-money enhancements for Nationals and National Team Trials. World Cup funding will follow performance-based criteria, with a metric like semifinal consistency required for full support. Uncertainty remains around LA28 quota spots.

John highlighted certain results from an athlete listening report, which indicated improved satisfaction overall. From the report, key needs of the athletes were identified, including clearer communication regarding eligibility and the availability of funding and other resources for performance and competition. It was noted that a low number of athletes completed the survey, and encouraged the athlete representatives on the Board to encourage athletes to take the survey because the USOPC evaluates its resources alongside survey outcomes. USAC will continue to enhance communication to athletes when the survey has been sent by the USOPC.

John previewed the inaugural kickoff of what is hoped-to-be an annual Coaches Summit, beginning in January 2026. The Summit will be designed to strengthen collaboration with top coaches, identify performance gaps, and better align youth and elite pathways. The Summit will emphasize integrating best practices into coaching from leading international federations. The initial Summit will be open to a small group of coaches to refine/determine proof of concept; however, in future years, USAC's goal is to open the Summit to a broader audience of coaches.

John then reported on Youth Series changes—including fall scheduling, increased capacity, flexible formats, and the new Vertical-Life scoring system— noting that all are performing well. The group discussed the need for additional program staff in the future to manage expected increased competition load, especially since only two USAC staff currently manage the Youth Programs and there is an expected increase in para climbing events in future years.

The Board discussed ideas about how to financially support gyms that may be struggling, and agreed that direct funding could not be provided by USAC, but it would prioritize best practices, guidance and connections to other gym owners when asked. The Board noted the importance of a consistent approach to future support requests.

The group also briefly returned to the Competition Eligibility Policy and noted that, when finalized, it would be communicated through Regional Coordinators. Deana Labriola and Kyra Condie volunteered to assist with the final language for the Policy.

The Board agreed to elevate sport-related items in future Board agendas and supported beginning hiring for key positions earlier in the budget cycle.

Meeting adjourned and went into closed session at 11:36am EST

APPROVED