

ICB Planning Meeting Minutes Sun., 6 Dec. 1998

OVERVIEW

Attendees

ICB GOALS

ICB Programs:
ICB Members
ICB Money
ICB in the Community
ICB Volunteers
ICB PR
ICB Sponsors
ICB Events

NEW TEAMS/POSITIONS

“Welcome Wheels”
Volunteer Czar
Treasurer
[PR covered in discussion of PR goals]

TEAM UPDATES

Advanced Touring
Night Skates
Website
Fitness & Race Training

OTHER

Bylaws
Organizational Development

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OVERVIEW

The attendees defined goals and new directions for the coming year and beyond, identified key niches to be filled either with new teams or positions, and presented updates on specific programs. The plans will be solidified at the next quarterly planning session in April, at which a high attendance is expected.

[In the interim, we decided to have monthly meetings this winter of the Planning Team Leaders and other interested parties.. leading up to a bigger meeting in April.]

Attendees:

Tom Keane, Robin Travers, Darrell Bibby, Neil Wetzler, Sarah Curi, Walter Wright, Susan Mix, Scott Klemm, Amy Shafer, Karin Travers, Stefano Santoro, Jennifer Staller, Kenn Sunshine, Tim Clarke, Jon & Bette Scarlet, Maida Sy.
[TK note: I have a sinking feeling I'm forgetting someone; please let me know!]

ICB GOALS (hardly an inclusive list, but the biggies that were discussed).

ICB Programs: Continue to target programs to growth opportunities, recognizing that general interests wax and wane, and that the club should maintain the flexibility and foresight to accommodate that.

- 1) The increased popularity of group skates and fitness training this year exemplifies the changing nature of club member interests and how the club responds.
- 2) Questionnaire data will be used to gauge changing interests.

- 3) Participants in programs will be encouraged to try out other ICB offerings. E.g., if you can do the night skate, you can race, and should be encouraged to do so.
- 4) Programs will accommodate as broad a range of abilities AS APPROPRIATE.

ICB Members: Increase membership rolls in a manner consistent with the stated purposes of the club (i.e. no “Kmart skaters”) and with a continuing high percentage of volunteers among the new enrollees.

- 1) Growth for its own sake is not the goal. The current membership of 300 could probably be doubled given the club infrastructure built up over the past several years.
- 2) A large number of the membership is in the 30-40 age range, and are largely self-identified as intermediates (at the time they join the club).
- 3) PR should be targeted to those who are the best fit with the ICB, suggesting that this is an exception to the rule that there’s no such thing as bad publicity.
- 4) Active recruitment of new members should continue at all club-sponsored events, and even be expanded upon by providing volunteers with club information to hand out.
 - a) SkateJam is an example of an event that draws in many more non-club members than club members (See Programs).
 - b) Jen and Darrell will write up their PR protocol to serve as a template for other event publicity: what does the job require, what works and what doesn’t (See Goal 6: ICB PR, and New Teams/Positions Available).
- 5) Club membership should have its rewards: club discounts at stores should be continued, and all club-sponsored events should offer club discounts.
- 6) An attempt should be made to address why people leave the club, though the feasibility of this was questioned.
- 7) New members should be greeted by the newly created “Welcome Wheels” Program (See New Teams/Positions), which will offer good-will trinkets (e.g., ICB key chain?) (sponsorship opp., see "ICB Sponsors") and assess their willingness to act as volunteers for club events.
- 8) The member application form on the website will be improved, though member solicitation is not necessarily a goal of the web-team (See Programs: Web-site)

ICB Money: Maintain financial stability.

- 1) The club is in good shape financially, with a small glitch in soliciting and collecting on advertising revenue from The Bearing (Tom K. to follow up on).
- 2) Other sources of revenue should be pursued (See Goal 7: ICB sponsors)
 - a) Advertising on the website
 - b) Sponsorship
- 3) A treasurer should be named (See New Teams/positions).
- 4) Protect members acting on behalf of the ICB from liability.

ICB in the Community: Reach out with safety and education programs.

- 1) Publicity should be designed to create and maintain a particular image and presence with the MDC and the public.
- 2) Some events should be designed specifically to provide community benefit.
- 3) Safety and educational events will go a long way to creating a positive image, especially if they are conducted with “celebrity” involvement (See "ICB PR").
- 4) The ICB should serve as a conduit for info about skate classes, and not offer classes itself, which would conflict with those offered by instructor members.
- 5) Ken volunteered to organize skate education information for easy reference.

ICB Volunteers: Reward and recognize members’ club involvement, especially in ways that foster “Shared Culture.”

- 1) Volunteerism among members is currently at ~20%, with 10% of members being the “core”. This proportion should be maintained.
- 2) Volunteerism should be encouraged through use of incentives that promote a “Shared Culture”, e.g., blinkies at night skates, or T-shirts for other events.
- 3) Incentives should be offered carefully, to reward real service.
- 4) A new position, Volunteer Czar, has been created, to facilitate bringing in volunteers and keeping them happy (See new New Teams/Positions). The Czar will coordinate with the Welcome Wheels team to engage new volunteers from the pool of new members. [This may be a separate position or may be absorbed into the Welcome Wheels Team -- to be discussed in Jan.]

6) A standardized "event fanny-pack" could be created for volunteers to wear, containing potentially useful items from band-aids to blinkies (as well as ICB PR, see below).

ICB PR: Facilitate the promotion of the club and associated events.

- 1) Jen and Darrell will describe their successful PR for SkateJam, to serve as a template for other PR efforts.
- 2) A PR czar will be drafted, preferably someone with real-life experiences [subsequently, Jon Scarlet and Tim Clarke volunteered, as well as Chris Shustak and Amy Shafer.]
- 3) An ICB PR package will be created, to have on hand for media opportunities:
 - a) Print media such as Globe, Herald
 - b) Broadcast, such as MediaOne
- 4) Media-drawing events will be considered, such as a "Statehouse Event", or celebrity participation in any event.
- 5) The PR Czar and team will publish press releases for important events.
- 6) Members will all have T-shirts to wear!
- 7) Event volunteers will have club promotional materials on hand in their "event fanny-pack" to provide to those interested.

ICB Sponsors: Seek out commercial sponsorship for the club and associated events.

- 1) Advertising in The Bearing and on the Web Site will be pursued.
- 2) Sponsorship opportunities will be offered on:
 - a) The "volunteer fanny-pack"
 - b) The "Welcome Wheels" items
 - c) ICB team jerseys

ICB Events

- 1) Participants will be informed in advance of the ability level required, and the style of the event (e.g., pack skating, sweep, stopping points, mileage, social aspects).
- 2) Event coordinators will ensure that the event occurs "as advertised".

Subsequent note:

The ICB Team Leaders agreed to a re-structuring of our skating programs at the Dec 6 meeting --- so that our offerings have distinct characteristics related to different member groups. This does not in any way mean that slower or faster skaters will ever be unwelcome at an event --- but, they will be expected to conform their expectations to the nature of the skate. The weekly and monthly offerings are as follows:

Sunday Morning City Skate -- Beginning/Intermediate street pace, skate as contiguous group, Cambridge

Midweek on the Minuteman (M.O.M) -- Beginning/Intermediate pace, skate as contiguous group, Lexington

Monthly Social Skates -- Intermediate pace, wait for group often, typically on rail trails.

Night Skates -- Intermediate pace, wait for group often, urban setting.
(no change in pace by week of month -- this is different than 1998)

Advanced Touring -- Fast pace, infrequent stops, rural roads, large hills common. Sunday mornings to minimize traffic.

Fitness & Inline Technique (FIT) -- Technique focused group workout, all ability levels welcome; basic stopping skills required. Saturdays so that don't conflict with Tours.

Races -- All ability levels welcome; basic stopping skills required; hills common.

Epic -- Intermediate - Elite, attitude is key.

NEW TEAMS/POSITIONS

A) "Welcome Wheels"

- 1) The Welcome Wheels Team will be responsible for personally contacting new members.
- 2) They will offer information about club offerings, and serve as a contact person for questions.
- 3) Welcome Wheels will give new members ICB trinkets, such as key chains and water bottles, that will bring them into the ICB "shared culture."
- 4) Welcome Wheels will coordinate with the Volunteer Czar, to identify new members who are willing and able to serve as club volunteers, and get them into the volunteer structure.
- 5) The concept of the WW team is to a) increase the percentage of members who actively participate in running the Club, and b) increase the membership renewal rate by reaching out personally to new members. This does not reflect a perceived weakness so much as an opportunity to recognize and leverage the main factor underlying our success -- a personal touch and shared culture. The group unanimously agreed that Mike Mercurio and Freddi Tribeck would make great team leaders... :-)

B) Volunteer Czar

will be responsible for maintaining a happy pool of volunteers through the use of volunteer incentives and matching volunteers' abilities with the jobs available.

- 1) Sarah offered to be interim Czar
- 2) Freddi and Mike Mercurio (sp?) were volunteered in absentia to be co-Czars.
- 3) may be absorbed into Welcome Wheels team.

C) A Treasurer needs to be chosen.

TEAM UPDATES

The Advanced Touring program has been created.

- 1) Aims Coney is Team leader, with able assistance from John Porter and others that have or will create routes and host skates.
- 2) This program will focus on longer skates, not limited to paths, for those beyond beginner proficiency level.
- 3) Potential problem: how best to accommodate people of varying ability levels?
Solution: tell people in advance exactly what to expect. This was successful at the Foliage Skate and the Turkey Roll.
- 4) This program will feed into training for A2A and the Jimmy Fund skate (Team ICB).

Night Skates. Neil Wetzler is the program leader. This is probably the ICB's highest visibility event, and a great opportunity to be seen as a responsible group.

- 1) In the past (before 1998), this skate characteristically had around 20-30 participants, mostly men between 25-35, going at a fast pace, which was not conducive to bringing in new skaters.
- 2) This year, the focus was changed to be more social, with a goal of increasing the group size to over 100 next year (this year's record was 90 people participating).
- 3) Problem: people are getting something they didn't bargain for, with the incremental difficulty increases (1st week beg; 4th wk advanced) every week not really working. This tends to polarize the event, and disappoint the Intermediate group, which are the target ICB members.

Possible Solutions:

- a) Have an Intro to Street Skating session offered weekly to accommodate beginners.
 - b) Drop the beginner categories from night skate participation.
 - c) Homogenize the routes to cover varying terrain, but at same intermediate level.
- 4) The Shepherds program is working well.
 - a) There are 10-12 shepherds per skate, charged with leading, sweeping, and skating in the pack to offer advice and assistance and give out information.
 - b) Shepherds will be ICB members, and thus be covered by ICB insurance against event-associated liability.
 - c) There will be a training program for shepherds, every 2 months. Only after the training session will the much-coveted shepherds' T-shirt be awarded. This is to ensure commitment, and to limit the number of T-shirts appearing on the skate.
 - d) Rules of conduct for shepherds will be strictly enforced.
 - e) Shepherds will be given "event fanny-packs" containing cards, ICB membership apps, spare batteries and bearings, etc.

Web Site- Susan is the team leader. This team creates a web presence for the ICB.

1) The team is working well, using e-mail to communicate on details, and in-person meetings for the big picture.
2) The website gets a significant amount of traffic, which can be measured now (and offered as good information for potential sponsors and advertisers).

3) Potential problem- surfers are not being turned into ICB members.

However, the job of the website is now more clearly defined to increase participation, and not necessarily membership.

4) The website serves as a great publicity vehicle, particularly with respect to promoting new events (e.g. the Turkey Roll).

5) Ideas for 1999:

a) Use the website to promote the ICB's "shared culture", with photos, and an updated contact list.

b) Publish equipment reviews to promote the idea that the ICB is THE skating authority in Boston. (hmm?)

c) Create an on-line Bearing newsletter archive.

d) Publish Team plans and position openings on the website. (Maida Sy)

e) Create a more easily accessed membership application.

~~**Fitness and Race Training**~~ (We will NOT use the acronym for this, Tom!).

Fitness and Inline Technique - Walter Wright has been in charge of this program, and will continue in this role with help from Robin Travers.

1) With a lot of racing opportunities in the Boston area, this program shifted its goal to its current one of presenting speedskating as a sport to beginners and intermediates, in a non-threatening atmosphere.

2) The social aspects of this program are working well, with a lot of exchange at the Rusty Bearing Roll in the spring, and bonding between advanced and beginner skaters facilitated by the coaching process.

3) Discounts to club members should be continued, along with family discounts, which serve to foster youth involvement.

4) Incorporation of teaching techniques not usually associated with racing should continue, e.g. yoga.

5) The goal of this program next year is to bring more people into this aspect of the sport, with a few big events to rally around, in particular A2A (Ken and Stefano in '99! And all those others on the list, too...)

OTHER DISCUSSION:

Sarah discussed the fact that in order to incorporate, the ICB must file 2 documents with the state:

1) Articles of organization, which is a document that is pretty much set in stone.

2) Bylaws, which cover the baseline organization of the group, and can be tailored.

The goal for filing these documents is in January, so suggestions should be made as soon as possible.

Tom suggested that leadership potential from among the ranks should be recognized and cultivated.