



Board of Directors Meeting

Mon Jan 19, 2026 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM EST

1. Call to Order

Date: January 19, 2026

Location: Remote

Presiden Smith Lilly called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM EST.

a. Roll Call

A quorum was present. Board members attended remotely, with only one honorary member absent.

Absent: Joe O'Brien

Attendance

Members

Remote: Diane Hauslein, Sara Mayer, Chris Schubert, Jennifer Dixon, Malissa Welke, Smith Lilly, Kristen Bagdasarian, Anna Marie Knipp, John Scheidt, Sophia Fischer, James Nichols, Rachel Seifert, Cece Hagan, Allen Bosworth, Joan Todd, sandra currier, Clif Paulsen, Allison Dearnorff, Larry Hartsock, Julie Behrends Jones

Absent: Joe O'Brien

b. Adoption of Agenda

Agenda Adopted as submitted

c. Minutes Approval

Minutes Approved without change.

d. Declare Conflict of Interest(s)

The President reminded board members to declare any conflicts of interest related to agenda items. No conflicts were declared.

2. President's Report - Smith Lilly

The President reported on the upcoming convention, noting:

- Significant planning efforts by the convention committee and councils
- The need for additional board member registrations
- The need for increased sponsorship participation
- Encouragement for board members to assist with promotion and outreach
- The President also provided a report on attendance at the UPHA Convention, noting positive engagement, educational sessions, and a strong kickoff to the show year.

3. Executive Director's Report - Sara Mayer

Convention and Industry Updates

- Equine Sports Council announced the launch of a Judges Certification Program at the UPHA Convention. Certification is available on the ESC website

World Championship Horse Show Proposal

- A proposal was submitted to the World Championship Horse Show.
- Meetings were held with representatives from Kentucky Venues and their board.
- Discussions were described as productive, with follow-up anticipated.

Staffing Updates

The organization announced the hiring of:

- A Development Manager
- A Marketing Coordinator
- A Program & Events staff member

All new staff began employment in early January and are actively engaged.

4. Human Resources Audit Report

Presenter: Jackie Koch, Fractional HR Director

A high-level summary of the completed HR audit was presented:

- The audit focused on systems, policies, and compliance, not individual employees.
- No high-risk compliance issues were identified.
- Improvements completed or underway include: Updated employee handbook and HR policies, standardized hiring and onboarding processes, implementation of an applicant

tracking system, performance review and goal-setting framework, clarification of HR and accounting responsibilities, and transition to digital employee records

- Plans are underway to migrate to a more integrated HR platform to support payroll, benefits, and onboarding.

The Board expressed appreciation for the improvements and their positive impact on employee experience.

5. Database Migration and Portal Consolidation Report

Presenter: Erik Lee

The Database Task Force provided an update on the database and member portal migration project:

- The overall migration plan has been validated as feasible.
- An external technology partner has been selected.
- Project governance is being managed using a hybrid Agile methodology.
- Data analysis identified duplication and standardization issues, primarily related to member records.
- Website changes have been implemented to reduce duplicate member account creation.
- Migration is targeted for spring 2026, subject to readiness and absence of delays.
- The migration will involve a planned hard cut with contingency access to the current environment.
- Microsoft Azure is the anticipated cloud hosting environment.

It was emphasized that the initial phase focuses on stabilizing infrastructure and data (“moving the furniture”), not on introducing new features. The public-facing website design will remain unchanged, while member and administrative portals will be consolidated for operational stability.

6. Council Reports

a. Finance Council Report - Rachel Seifert

The Finance Council presented year-end financial reports:

- The organization holds approximately \$2 million in assets and \$2.5–\$3 million in annual revenues and expenses.
- Fiscal year net income closed with an improvement over the prior month but below budget.
- Variances were attributed to reduced timing differences in pledge recognition, unbudgeted audit expenses, increased legal fees, and annual meeting expenses.
- Liquidity remains stable, with sufficient cash on hand.
- The Finance Council recommended that pledges be recorded on the balance sheet until collected.

Motion: Approve the year-end financial reports.

- Vote: Approved
- Abstention: CeCe Hagan

b. Governance Council Report - Jennifer Dixon

Updates were provided regarding the 2026 annual meeting and election process:

- Voting will be conducted electronically via a third-party vendor.
- Ballots open January 21 and close February 12.
- No voting will occur at the annual meeting.

c. Registry Council Report - Kristen Bagdasarian and Katriona Adams

Registry activity for 2025 included:

- Registration applications received: 1,270
- Horses registered: 1,157
- Transfers received: 2,388
- Transfers completed: 2,523

Proposed clarifications to CH points language were tabled for further review.

d. Development, Marketing, Youth, Competitions, Membership, and Facilities Reports

Updates were provided across councils, including:

- Convention sponsorship and outreach efforts
- Strong and successful journal advertising performance
- Youth council applications and planning
- Horse show applications and promotions
- Committee and council appointments coming prior to Annual Meeting
- New member drive and we want you back campaign success
- Facilities projects on hold until early Spring 2026

10. Executive Committee Election

The Nominating Committee presented the recommended candidates for the 2026 Executive Committee:

- President: Chris Schubert
- Past President: Smith Lilly
- Vice President: Allison Deardorff
- Secretary: Malissa Welke
- Treasurer: Sophia Fischer
- President-Elect: Jennifer Dixon
- At-Large: CeCe Hagan

Notice was waived by unanimous consent, and the candidates were approved.

11. Audit Committee Report - Sophia Fischer

Outstanding audit reports for prior years remain in progress with the current audit firm. Vendor delays cited. Available materials will be published with appropriate disclosures.

12. Charter Club Bylaw Amendment

Motion: Reduce minimum charter club membership requirement from 20 to 15. Vote unanimously approved.

13. Joyce Webster Grant

Chris Schubert recused herself from the discussion.

Motion: Award the Joyce Webster Grant to Christy Parker.

- Vote: Approved
- Abstention: Chris Schubert

14. Executive Director Year-End Report - Sara Mayer

The Executive Director presented a year-end summary highlighting organizational stabilization, governance improvements, financial stewardship, IT and HR advancements, and staff development. The Board expressed appreciation for leadership and progress.

15. Meeting adjourned after motion to enter Executive Session

Motion: Enter executive session to discuss personnel matters and excuse the Executive Director.

The Board entered executive session.

The Board of Directors approved the review of the Executive Director and a \$25,662 bonus based on earned metrics on the Competitive Bonus Plan.

Submitted by: Malissa Welke, Board Secretary