Minutes
Cherry Blossom, Inc. Race Committee
April 30, 2012 Meeting
Westin City Center Hotel
Washington, DC

The meeting opened at 7:10 pm, after dinner and drinks, with a drawing for random prizes. Long sleeve race t-shirts were also available.

The following committee members were present: Phil Stewart, Becky Lambros, Denny Steinauer, Kari Keaton, Jean Arthur, Phil Pommerening, Nancy Betress, Jen McCollum, Rob Wolfe, Drew Woodrich (minutes), Irv Newman, Alex White, Charles Walker, Keira Carlstrom, Steve Esmacher, Leslie Williams, Marsha Way, Michelle Carter, Adam Lambros, Molly Barackman Eder, Kathy Freedman, Rick Freedman, Muffet Chatterton, Arlene Solbeck, Steve Solbeck, Tom Filippone, George Tarrico, Betty Wang, Polly Porter, Eric Sinkeldam, Chan Robbins, George Banker, Chris Tatreau, and Candice Mothersille.

Phil Stewart stated that this year’s event was one of the best ever. He complimented committee members, saying that they found a way to respond to whatever the weekend threw at them. He read a few thank you e-mails from participants. Phil continued that the unique character of this event is a result of the efforts made by all committee members. Problems experienced last year were solved. Phil requested input as planning begins for next year.

The two day expo was a huge hit. The increased hours for packet pickup solved last year’s overcrowding problem, except for the heavy attendance during the first hour on Friday. During the two day expo, there were enough people in the building to give it energy.

A post-race conference call has been held with the credit unions; they agreed this year’s event was great. The current credit union sponsorship continues through 2016.

There has been no news from the National Park Service, which is good news. Rick Merryman helped smooth the way. Everything went well with the U.S. Park Police also.

There were kudos for the volunteers.

There were some issues with Westin Hotel. The Madison Hotel worked well.

Becky Lambros brought in two new sponsors this year, Gold’s Gym and E*Trade.

There was a small increase of 600 people who rode Metro to the race.

The executive committee will meet in May to start planning for next year’s race. With the retirement of Rick and Kathy Freedman, there will be a new timing and scoring company in 2013. The hiring will happen soon.

Next year’s host hotel will be the JW Marriott Hotel at 14th & Pennsylvania Avenue NW; this is very close to the race site. The following year, the race returns to the recently renovated Renaissance Hotel on 9th Street NW. Phil is signing hotel contracts through 2017.
Discussion moved around the table to committee members. Chris Tatreau thanked Rob Wolfe and his start/finish team for doing great work. The U.S. Park Police closed streets on time. There was a last minute tent move on the Washington Monument Grounds.

George Banker said that online team registration worked well. Phil noted that George put together a race history display at the expo.

The women’s advanced start included 30 runners, an increase from 8 runners in 2011. Phil and Chan Robbins worked together on this project. A few days before the race, an e-mail was sent to the female advance start participants. Next year, it needs to be emphasized that race day withdrawals from the advance start cause scoring problems. Kathy Freedman noted that it was difficult to record bib numbers at the start line of all the female advance starters because the runners move about.

Chan Robbins has stepped down as seeded runner coordinator; he also served previously as the Cherry Blossom treasurer.

Polly Porter offered thanks for the opportunity to serve as medical coordinator. Polly and Betty Wang did extensive preparation. There were 56 medical volunteers and 17 medical runners; volunteers loved their assignments and many will return the following year. The medical setup on Saturday went smoothly and was completed early in the day. Communication with central command went well. There was higher than expected traffic at one of the medical tents.

On race day, there were two transports to the hospital; unfortunately, one runner passed away.

Phil Stewart elaborated on the deceased runner. The death was the first during the 40-year history of the race. The 71-year-old seeded runner, Lloyd Blackwell, went down near mile 9 and suffered a heart attack. A medical runner reached him quickly; the U.S. Park Police flew in a helicopter and transported the runner to Washington Hospital Center. Double bypass surgery was performed at WHC, and the patient was in a coma for one week before he passed away. The family appreciated the high quality care that was provided.

Becky added that social runner Molly Barackman Eder provided Facebook updates on the fallen runner so that concerned participants had information. The race made a $500 donation to the American Heart Association in his memory. Denny Steinauer attended a celebration of the runner’s life and spoke with his wife.

George Tarrico said that preparations at the race site went well; there was a slight delay due to wind, but tasks were completed on schedule. He offered thanks to Sergeant Murphy, who had spotted unsecured needles in the medical tent. Unlike last year, parking went well.

Tom Filippone reported that the golf carts arrived on time and with gasoline in the tanks.

Steve Solbeck said that number lookup went smoothly, and the volunteers were great.

Arlene Solbeck and Muffet Chatterton expressed disappointment that merchandise sales volume was low; the booth was located in a quieter section of the expo. They had no merchandise from previous years to sell; there were no hats, fleece, jackets, or long sleeve shirts. Michelle Carter and Marsha Way affirmed there were several requests to purchase older merchandise. And there was no merchandise
specific to the 2012 race (i.e., this year’s artwork). The inexpensive items on sale did not attract interest. And there were no online sales.

Phil admitted there were issues with New Balance; shoe companies might not be structured to be responsive to apparel merchandise requests. NB is enthusiastic about the relationship with Potomac River Running, which is a big account.

Kathy Freedman noted that the large, mostly unused, NB race merchandise booth space next to the t-shirt distribution area caused extra congestion in the t-shirt area.

Only 40 runners visited the small Solutions/Pickup tent on Sunday morning looking for bib pick up on Sunday morning. Rick Freedman said that expo signs are needed upstairs in the bib pickup area directing runners to the t-shirt distribution area downstairs.

Molly Barackman Eder reported that most comments posted on Facebook and Twitter were positive. She mentioned some other comments, such as a few runners who had difficulty finding the finisher medals. The drummers were very popular.

Denny Steinauer said the credit unions handled the satellite races; they were small events but the runners were happy.

Kari Keaton offered praise for the band, Dreamscape Project, at the awards stage; it was pleasant working with them. Nancy Betress added her praise for the music group; the band helped her set up the awards tent. Kari said Gold’s Gym offered a great warm up.

Candice Mothersille said that bag check needed more space; the lines of runners waiting for porta-johns intersected with lines waiting for bag check. The tent size was sufficient. Her volunteers were excellent; they were hearing impaired but worked quickly.

Jean Arthur thanked Chris Tatreau for equipment distribution that went well. There was no Gatorade at the 5K. There was high demand for water just past the finish line on 15th Street. Water station volunteers are regulars.

Phil Pommerening reported that the command central tent worked well; Henry Lyles, two fire department personnel, and one U.S. Park Police officer worked with Phil. George Tarrico said he would provide a generator for the tent next year.

Nancy Betress noted that some parents came to the awards stage asking for the location of the youth fun run. Kari said that she talked to a parent; the fun run started early, perhaps by 15 minutes. Phil Stewart replied that offering heats next year would enable more children to participate.

Jen McCollum said that things went well at the credit union tent, and her volunteers were good. She mentioned one minor problem: every year she requests but does not receive garbage containers. She had to pick up scattered trash items herself.

Rob Wolfe said that the yellow corral at the start line was too small. At the start, the red corral started to move up immediately as the yellow bib runners cleared out, so runners who belonged in the yellow corral and who were standing on the sidelines, were unable to jump in and join their group. Late starters were less of a problem this year. Some of his volunteers were no-shows.
Phil Stewart said the total time allotted for the waves was expanded by ten minutes this year. Rob replied that the extra time allowed each wave to line up and clear the start area before the next wave. Becky asked how the addition of pacers went. Rob said pace groups in the corrals worked well, except that the pace signs were dropped near the starting area—there needs to be a plan for collecting the signs.

Charles Walker observed that medal distribution went well, but more tables are needed to minimize long waiting times during peak demand. The medal tent was near the food, so there were discarded banana peels. The volunteers did a great job. Charles requested that the 5K finisher medals be relocated to the 5K bag check area.

There was a brief discussion on the feasibility of moving medal distribution to 15th Street. Rob Wolfe noted it might cause back up near the finish line. Only thirty race mugs were distributed, although Molly saw positive feedback on Twitter about the finisher mugs.

Alex White thanked Marsha Way and Michelle Carter for staffing the information table on Saturday. The additional information tents on Sunday meant that the medical tent didn’t get pestered on race day with information inquiries.

Keira Carlstrom requested something better than a discman for the music. She suggested providing binoculars to the finish line spotter, who assists Creigh Kelley as finishers’ names are announced.

Steve Esmacher provided a summary of the 5K run/walk. Don Shulman provided good assistance, and the signage worked well. Jim Marino replaced the missing police escort. There were small lanterns to light the tents; someone provided toilet paper when the 5K porta-johns ran out. Phil Stewart requested-based on runner feedback—more frequent announcements be made to the walkers on starting in the back.

Lesley Williams said that food and water went well, but the bananas were overripe. The bananas were stored in a truck during race weekend, and the weather was warmer than usual.

Marsha Way and Michelle Carter reported that 2,210 volunteers signed up and 1,588 showed up; 30% no show is normal.

Adam Lambros requested that he be notified when the gators arrive on site. Polly Porter said medical had to share a gator with command central. Candice noted it was great to have a gator at bag check.

Phil Stewart mentioned the possibility of a family meet-up area at next year’s race.

The meeting concluded at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Drew Woodrich for  
Capital Running Company, Race Administrator