Minutes
Cherry Blossom, Inc. Race Committee
April 29, 2013 Meeting
J.W. Marriott Hotel
Washington, DC

The meeting opened at 7:00 pm, after dinner and drinks. Race t-shirts and mugs were available.

The following committee members were present: Phil Stewart, Becky Lambros, Denny Steinauer, Rachel Miller, Chris Tatreau, Steve Broyles, Adam Lambros, Jean Arthur, Candice Mothersille, Timi Rogers, Keira D'Amato, Nita Lalla, Kenneth Younger, Alex White, T.G. Marsden, Robyn Marsden, Irv Newman, Kenny Donovan, Eric Sinkeldam, George Tarrico, Randy Skovrinski, Bruce Lung, Rick Merryman, Jen McCollum, Marsha Way, Leslie Williams, Muffet Chatterton, Rob Wolfe, Peggy Posey, Charles Walker, Patti Lieblich, Bee McLeod, and Drew Woodrich.

Phil Stewart thanked everyone for their expressions of concern for Becky Lambros and Phil after the Boston Marathon finish line bombings. Phil and Ben Beach were on the marathon race course, and Becky was in a store when the tragedy happened. Phil briefly recounted his journey from Heartbreak Hill back to his hotel room, which he reached on foot at about 7 pm. Becky briefly described how she had left the finish area and entered a retail store when the bombs went off.

Becky was able to reach Molly Barackman-Eder, who posted information on Cherry Blossom's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Phil will write an article for Road Race Management. Fortunately, there is a year to examine our security preparedness before next year's Cherry Blossom race; it will be a summer project. Chris Tatreau will be at the Broad Street Run in Philadelphia on May 5; security preparations have increased for that event. Rachel Miller will attend an out-of-town conference discussing the medical experiences at the Boston Marathon. A couple of years ago, Irv Newman worked on a contingency plan and document for Cherry Blossom.

Phil Stewart noted that this has been a very successful year. The credit unions are excited about their role in the event. Hosting the USA Women's Ten Mile Championship, presented by America's Credit Unions, was a real plus. The national championship added interest to the elite competition. The Washington Post finally assigned a reporter, Roman Stubbs, to write a story on the elite competition that was published in Monday's sports section.

Phil has not heard anything from the National Park Service (NPS); no news is usually good news. Rick Merryman, who has retired from NPS, serves as an event consultant.

Rick Merryman commented that he looks forward to the next ten years serving on the race committee. No NPS staff showed up on site with last minute requests. Rick wants to examine the schedule of vendor arrivals because this year they all showed up at the same time. Good weather helped the success of the race.

Phil noted that the transition to a new timing company, EMMI, went well; the Florida company has big event experience. Capital Running Company (CRC) had timed and administered the Cherry Blossom Ten Mile for 17 years. Phil worried that something might fall between the cracks without a race administrator. Fortunately, key staff who served with CRC stepped in during race weekend, including Race Committee members Nita Lalla and Randy Skovrinski; Jack Rafferty; Bob Moore; Robert and Alice Raiford; Deb Beneke; and Jaki Judkins. Their assistance made Phil feel much better.

Phil said he received kudos from participant e-mails about the volunteers. Metro ridership during early Sunday morning was 14,000; money charged by WMATA for the early opening will be returned. The percentage of female finishers has been increasing every year; it reached 59% in 2013. The race results booklet in PDF format will be sent out by the end of May.
Next year, race headquarters returns to the downtown Renaissance Hotel. Credit Union sponsorship continues through 2016. Phil expects the race courses to be the same. Thanks to the hard work of the Race Committee, the event continues strong.

Comments from Race Committee members began with Rachel Miller's report on Medical; she was one of four medical coordinators this year. Three people were transported to the hospital; most runners treated in the tents had musculoskeletal issues, such as knee sprains. One person was bitten by a dog; one person had an allergic nut reaction after eating a muffin; and there was one case of hypothermia. There was a brief discussion on communicating the possible trace presence of nuts in the muffins.

For future races, the number of hypothermia cases is a becoming a medical concern. Several runners sought mylar blankets from the medical tent; participants sweat during the run, leaving them vulnerable to cold or windy weather conditions after the race. The on-course medical tents should have plastic walls to protect runners from the cold and wind.

Rachel said there were two radio issues: 1) She wanted to pick up the radios for medical during the expo but they were not available; it required extra time to pick them up race morning. 2) Medical uses the second channel and it went down. There was discussion with Kenny Donovan, who suggested reserving all radios under one name to hasten the sign out procedure. Kenny said he will get a second backup repeater next year to keep the second channel on air; the first backup repeater went down this year.

There was one seizure at 11:20 am after the medical tent operations had been closed, so 9-1-1 was called. Becky Lambros requested that medical cases that happen before 11:30 am be treated at the tent, and Rachel agreed to that request. Rachel noted that the U.S. Park Police came to medical because they had not received a timeline of the different starts; Becky will talk to USPP.

Rachel said that the main medical tent needs to be located away from the finish line, because most medical incidents happen after runners have left the finish area. Some runners had difficulty finding the infield medical tent (it had red markings on the roof); Rachel suggested more noticeable identification.

Medical spotters seated in lifeguard chairs mostly fielded information questions. Alex White will work with medical to try new locations for information volunteers, including putting his volunteers inside medical tents. The expo medical location needs more publicizing.

Rachel expressed concern about the safety of medical supplies before race day; the porta-johns inside the tent had been used. Denny Steinauer said he was at the staging area on Saturday and saw a USPP officer on duty. Candice Mothersille suggested using "Private" tent signs; it has eliminated the problem of early porta-john use at the bag check tent. Rob Wolfe also reported the dirty condition of his group's porta-john. Peggy Posey added that one angry man complained about the absence of toilet paper.

George Tarrico responded that next year he will have all porta-johns secured with locks before race day and cleaned on Sunday morning; the cable ties were removed surreptitiously by the public this year. Keys will be used to unlock the units on race day, which is difficult work before sunrise. The backup plan will be to use bolt cutters to remove the locks. In addition to problems with unclean units, a large quantity of toilet paper disappeared.

Rachel needs assistance sending out one mass e-mail to volunteers. She also is unfamiliar with excel spreadsheets. There was a 30% no-show rate for medical volunteers, so she will need at least 100 volunteer sign-ups next year. It was requested that she put her request in writing and e-mail it to Marsha Way or Michelle Carter.
Adam Lambros said the supervising of gators went smoothly. George Tarrico said he found gators at the medical tent after the event; Rachel was unaware of the presence of gators at the medical tent.

Steve Broyles said the bus for his group worked out great; all the volunteer course marshal teams were dropped off.

Denny Steinauer noted that Bob Burgess coordinated photographic coverage of Cherry Blossom Ten Mile events, and made arrangements for race photographers on motorcycles.

Chris Tatreau voiced concern about security arrangements in the finish line area and at the intersection of 15th Street & Independence Avenue. Bee McLeod echoed concern about finish line security; she tried to move people away from the area, but it requires someone dressed as an authority figure. Rachel added that a male finisher ran into a photographer at the finish line; the runner was not injured.

Chris said there is too much spectator foot traffic in the finish area; he did not see a USPP officer to help with crowd control. Loading equipment after the race is hard; Chris will investigate getting a local labor force that doesn't leave with the trucks.

Charles Walker said that distribution of finisher medals went well. He requested ground cover to protect fallen medals from mud; a tarp would suffice. Phil and Becky added that there were brisk post-race sales of unclaimed finisher medals, and it generates revenue. Medals are distributed only to interested participants, which reduces waste.

Head judge Bee McLeod said there were only two minutes to check in the elite women; she would prefer eight minutes. She requested better information on the coding of bib numbers improve monitoring of access to the corrals. The posting of race results for one hour post-race review went well.

There was a brief discussion of whether the event will seek to host the USA Women's Ten Mile Championship, presented by America's Credit Unions, next year. Phil said the credit unions funded this year's championship at a cost of $17,500; he will ask whether they are willing to continue that financial support. The sooner the race applies to host the championship, the more time there will be to promote it.

Rob Wolfe had great volunteers. The entry of elite male athletes from the 14th Street side of the start area did not work well; he had to improvise an opening in the barricades.

Peggy Posey said the 4:30-6:00 am time slot for her volunteers worked well. She would like "Post-Race Food" signs to reduce pre-race eating. The quantities of food ordered closely matched demand; there were only two boxes of uneaten food. The Lara Bars were a huge hit. Runners tend to crowd at the first food tables; George suggested using a bull horn to encourage finishers to move along to other tables.

Becky explained that Peter Verasin was unable to attend the meeting after an accident. Peter has done outstanding work as the Greening coordinator but the job has grown, so a recycling committee will be recruited to assist him. Peggy commented that the visibility of recycling containers needs to be increased. Becky responded that volunteers perform an important role by encouraging people to carry trash to the recycling stations. Peggy noted that the Green Team did a super job of folding and stacking empty cardboard boxes in the food area. Robyn Marsden suggested looking for a District school interested in partnering with the race to support recycling efforts.
Muffet Chatterton reported on Merchandise; the location in the expo was ideal. They sold out 2012 New Balance (NB) merchandise, and enjoyed brisk sales of 2013 NB women's items. Potomac River Running did a merchandise inventory immediately after the expo closed so that the online shop could open Sunday afternoon. This quick turnaround produced heavy sales volume during the first 24 hours after the race. Saturday volunteers were excellent; they were very short of volunteers for Friday afternoon.

Leslie Williams reported a smooth 5K Run/Walk operation; the overall winner was 12-year-old Nathan Davis (17:22). The location of the porta-johns was ideal. Phil said that one militant runner in the 5K complained about unequal treatment of participants (compared to the ten-mile runners). Next year, Phil will produce a separate 5K Run/Walk information brochure to rectify this matter.

Marsha Way spoke on Volunteers; Michelle Carter was absent due to migraines. Committee members should e-mail Marsha or Michelle now for 2014, while the event is fresh in everyone's memory. Information will be sent to volunteers in November. This year, the first shift on Friday was understaffed in several areas. Marsha urged networking at work to recruit volunteers. Rachel Miller, Medical, offered one example: she distributes volunteer recruiting flyers to all doctor offices she visits. Bee McLeod commented that stay-at-home moms might be one group to target as Friday volunteers; Becky replied that possibility would be worth exploring, although it would require offering child care at the expo.

Marsha said that MarathonGuide.com has a tool for sending out mass e-mails, and she can explain it to those interested in thanking their volunteers. Saying thank you builds good will, and encourages volunteers to sign up again.

George Tarrico said there were no unusual logistical problems this year, except for the out-of-control porta-johns. However, a $4,000 generator located on Hains Point was stolen. Bee noted that using a large chain to secure property to light poles has worked at southern Virginia road races. Becky highlighted the outstanding effort of George, Rick Merryman, and Randy Skovrinski, who worked at the staging area from Wednesday, April 3 through Monday, April 8.

Eric Sinkeldam, U.S. Park Police (USPP), said he will defer to Chris Tatreau on a strategy to secure the intersection at 15th Street & Independence Avenue; perhaps those traveling to the Tidal Basin to view cherry blossoms can be directed onto 12th Street. There is a learning curve for the USPP, so start thinking in advance if you need something. Eric offered a possible alternate route for the return leg of the 5K Run/Walk; Phil and Eric will continue the discussion later.

Bruce Lung said security coordination with USPP was great. His group experienced a shortage of volunteers; there were fewer course marshals from the credit unions this year. Jean Arthur explained that a group of 25 young people did not show up, perhaps due to miscommunication from the organizing credit union. Becky said she will let the credit unions know that we need more volunteers.

Randy Skovrinski said that he learned a great deal during his first year; it requires an ability to "put out fires." He just needs to know what is going to happen, and when, so he can be there to do it.

Candice Mothersille said her bag check volunteers showed up in good numbers. There were some problems with lines because people with lower bib numbers checked bags at a higher rate than last year (bag check is organized by bib number ranges). Timi Rogers encountered one obnoxious man who complained and made a scene; she wrote down his bib number.

Candice remarked that increased communication (signs, messages to participants) will be needed for 2014 on the event's 'no duffle bags allowed' policy after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings. Bee McLeod added that she was at a New York Road Runners event (April 21), and Mary Wittenberg had already implemented enhanced baggage security measures.
Nita Lalla spoke about her role as the new packet pick-up coordinator; she had overseen packet pick-up five years ago for CRC. She has wonderful volunteers, but her group needs to do a better job of closing up shop; they were handing out bib numbers thirty minutes after the expo closed on Saturday. Becky responded that she will provide people to shut it down, and will station someone at the room door to rebuff tardy runners. Marsha said an announcement about the closing time will need to be made inside the building; she verified that the doors into the building were locked on time.

Nita said there was one angry woman on race day who showed up and demanded a bib although she was unregistered; the woman said she was a fundraiser. Phil responded that he lets a few fundraisers register after the March 1 deadline but he does not allow race day registration.

Keira D'Amato spoke on Hospitality. The Friday evening VIP packet pick-up sold all the donated wine, and a couple thousand dollars was raised. The Sunday pre-race warm up led by Gold's Gym went well. Keira received some requests for more bands on the course.

Robyn Marsden said the youth run went great, and she praised her volunteers. Some tables at her site disappeared but George Tarrico quickly found more tables. There were more than 500 youth who participated in the fun run. Robyn is an educator, and race day excitement makes her effort worthwhile.

T.G. Marsden said VIP parking went well; there were plenty of parking spaces. Chris Tatreau will supply cones for the intersection of 14th Street & Jefferson Drive to stop motorists from turning into the VIP parking area. The volunteer group and sweep bus driver did a good job.

Becky stated that it is doubtful the race will earn "gold" level certification because the requirements have been changed; more documentation is now required. But the event will continue at the "silver" level.

The meeting concluded at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Drew Woodrich