



Branch Leadership Committee
Meeting Minutes for April 15, 2026
6:00pm to 7:30pm via Zoom

Meeting Information

Zoom Meeting [Link](#)

Branch Leadership Members

- Michael Abernathy (BHAM)
- Scott Braswell (EVE)
- Nick Mayo (EVE—Past)
- Travis Vermeer (FH)
- Melissa White (KIT)
- Katja Hurt (OLY)
- Danny Casady (TAG)
- Amy Stafford (TAC - Elect)
- Kelsey Hoffman (SEA)
- Chelsea Mullins (SEA - Elect)
- Golin Chapman or Cheryl Talbert (GA)
- Tess Wendel (Safety)
- Michelle Song (Staff)
- Becca Polgase (Staff)
- Amanda Piro (VP of Branches—Past)
- TJ King (VP of Branches)

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions; including icebreaker – TJ
2. Review and approval of the meeting agenda for April 15, 2025
Motion to Approve: Katja; Second: Mel; Approved
3. Review and approval of the meeting [minutes](#) for March 25, 2026
Motion to Approve: Danny; Second: Nick; Approved
4. Integrating Behavioral Elements into Safety Reports - Tess Wendel
 - Planned Discussion:
 - Process: What happens when an incident report is received that includes problem behavior?
 - Highlight gaps/black box areas following reporting (communication & follow-up)



- Discuss areas for improvement that BLC could support
- Discussion Notes & Takeaways:
 - **Clarifying pathways:** Incident reports (activity-based safety issues) go to branch/committee safety leaders and feed into anonymized quarterly summaries; behavior complaints (e.g., code of ethics / prohibited behavior) are handled by staff, creating parallel but sometimes disconnected workflows.
 - **Workflow gaps & fragmentation:** Many entry points (incident form, feedback form, emails to chairs/staff) encourage reporting but can lead to inconsistent handling, with some behavior issues resolved only at committee/branch level and never reaching staff or safety.
 - **Participant notes & retaliation concerns:** Participant notes can be a useful, objective, neutral tool for documenting concerns and supporting later complaints, but they're underused due to discomfort, privacy worries, and fear of retaliation, which also discourages formal behavior complaints.
 - **Next steps for improvement:** Tess and the Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault Prevention Committee are updating the behavior complaint form and guidance, and BLC/branches can help by:
 - Strengthening regular chair–safety–committee communication.
 - Standardizing course messaging on how/when to file incident and behavior reports.
 - Incorporating these topics into leadership training and conference sessions.

5. Activity Charters & Standards

- [Backpacking Council Charter](#) Final Reading / Discussion - Motion to Approve: Nick; Second: Melissa; First Reading Approved
 - Backpacking council updated governance section to mirror hiking
 - Most other recommended changes also accepted with exception of change to consensus
 - BLC still recommends revisiting consensus ($\frac{2}{3}$), but has approved at current 100% consensus
- [Scrambling Standards](#) Second Reading / Discussion - Motion to Approve: Travis; Second: Nick; Second Reading Approved (Katja abstains)
 - Discussion of AIARE refreshers & need to have current training & practice of avy safety - no current way to track expirations of the badge, but preference for more recent training to maximize safety
- [Sea Kayaking Standards](#) Second Reading / Discussion - Motion to Approve: Danny; Second: Cheryl; Second Reading Approved
 - Committee responded to all BLC comments related to activity participants, etc.
- Updated Activity Council & Standards [Spreadsheet](#)



6. [Branch Reports](#) – Mountaineer Branch Chairs:

Please fill out your Branch Report ahead of the meeting in the [BLC Branch Reports google doc](#).

- Open leadership positions
- Relevant Updates
- Status of Branch Charters

Key Notes

- Verbal branch reports were skipped for time; refer to shared branch report document for branch reports
- One group question from Tacoma: activity chairs in your branches; do your local branch councils approve those chairs or leave it up to committees? (Olympia lets committee decide, so does Everett unless a formal committee doesn't exist, Foothills requires branch council to ratify committee decisions though there is never really pushback)
- One group question from Olympia: how short can the charter actually be? As long as it covers the purpose of the council or committee, decision making details, governance details, membership and removal of membership, etc – as long as it hits the critical components it's good to go

7. Committee & Organizational Reports

- Safety – Tess
- Global Adventures – Cindy
- Operations – Becca / Michelle
 - **Reminder:** please review your branch's officers and update contact info in the BLC member tracking spreadsheet
 - **Reminder:** Bi-monthly treasurers meeting (next on April 16); branch chairs also welcome to attend; encouraged members to share the meeting info with their treasurers

8. Adjourn

- Motion to Approve: Nick; Second: Mel; Approved
- Next BLC Meeting: May 20, 2026