

KROKA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MEETING MINUTES

February 3, 2026 - Remote Zoom Meeting

Board Attendance: Lela McCaffrey, Sarah Scherschel, Daniella Malin, & Jackson Ennis

Absent: Bets Dews

Staff: Ezra Fradkin & Nathan Lyczak

Prospective board members: Alan Roberts & Sondra Nelson

Meeting called to order at 6:35pm

Meeting:

1. Board & Prospective Board Member Introductions

Welcome Alan & Sondra. All board members provided introductions and our guests introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes

- November 2025 Meeting - approved by consensus
- December 2025 Meeting - approved by consensus

3. Directors' Report - Ezra & Nathan

Leadership update - Ezra showed slides showing:

- Year-round team: Ezra introduced new staff members. New organizational structure diagram
- Small program teams diagram. This illustrates groups of staff organized around each cost center:
 - CON - contracted programs
 - SAP - school and summer programs
 - CAP - community programs
 - ADM - admin
 - ORD - outreach and development
 - FARM
 - FAC - facility
 - SEP - semester
- Full organization diagram

Semester Programs

- Winter Semester staff training - all staff working with winter semester winter camped together for three days as part of training.
- Winter Semester students are heading into the woods. There are 13 students from around the country, Ecuador, and Germany. So far things are going well. Baking sourdough biscuits - these are an important part of semester expedition cooking. The biscuits have lard from Kroka pigs in them. Partnered with a local bakery this year instead of doing it batch by batch at Kroka.
- Sledding - Showed a fun photo of the students on the hill. This is metaphorical - symbolizing letting go and letting the momentum carry them into semester
- Last Fall Kroka ran two simultaneous semesters. We are doing that again: Roaring canyons + Hellbender.
 - Hellbender - This is a new program aimed at older students who will bike from Kroka down Appalachia (Eastern Continental Divide Trail) and to the coast for some paddling then back to Kroka via DC & NYC.
 - There's been a lot of interest in both programs already!!!

Summer Programs

- Summer enrollment - well above last year and the year before but not as good as 2023 at this time.
- Capstone programs historically are the hardest to enroll. This year those programs are filling up the fastest. This represents an opportunity to bring in new families and shows retention of existing families.
- Average enrollment by age category shows we're close to or at 10 students for the programs at all age categories. Ten students per program is what we based our budget on conservatively. We'd like to see 12 students per program.
- Current challenges -
 - Lower than usual staff retention. This is true for the younger staff particularly where apprentices return as assistant leaders. Ecuador staff and guest teachers are returning. We do have a lead teacher for every program, which is good, but we need to hire more assistant teachers.
 - Vacancies - in staffing
 - Less seasonal staff applications
 - Food manager vacancy
 - Staff nurse will not be returning
 - The future of the farm is uncertain. Jacob is now a contract employee with Kroka. We are working with him and Emily as independent farmers and education contractors. We are also working with a USDA mediator (free state service) to

look at how Kroka and Steppingstone Commons Farm can best support each other.

- So far this has been positive. We'd like to have a dedicated farmer but what Jacob and Emily are doing is incredible and we want to support them like we do with Orchard Hill so this may be what our farm future looks like.

Winterfest coming on Saturday, February 7

4. Outreach & Development

Nathan showed the fundraising dashboard which shows how the appeal is doing. Gifts trickle into March usually. The appeal was sent to 1066 households. So far we've raised \$52,460 with 82 gifts. More may trickle in. For the first time we have some families providing monthly donations. For comparison, the 2024 appeal brought in \$62k in 103 gifts

5. Committee Reports

Finance (Mary & Lela)

- *2025 QIV Financials* - We came in "break even" ish
- Program budget came in 20k short but this is a smaller shortfall than expected due to strong Roaring Canyon enrollment
- Donations came in 71k over what was expected for the year.
- The Board reviewed the numbers.
- We made significant investments into assets. Cash is down but we used it to invest in infrastructure and reduce mortgage payments. Lela says the current position is strong and we have reserves to continue from a strong place.
- We will require an audit - thanks to Nathan's successful fundraising - income exceeds threshold.

Building & Grounds (Jackson & Sarah)

- *748 Forest Road Renovation (Ezra/Nathan)*
 - Things are underway and a course has been decided. Nathan showed the floor plan and the list of what needs to be done.
 - Renovations will cost \$80k. Renovations create two distinct apartments and a flex room.

Consideration of Long Term Residential Leases (Jackson)

- Possibility of long term residency or housing tenure for long term staff (20+ years) came up last year. The benefits of this include keeping long term knowledge at Kroka and housing not needing to be tied to employment. We now want to consider this carefully. Jackson is posting a proposal and feedback form to Google Drive to determine if we want to move forward with this idea and create a policy. He will email the link to the form. A long-term residential lease is likely to not be a common occurrence. Board members are to read and respond to the feedback form by the next meeting in April.

Governance (Sarah)

- *Verbal acknowledgement of Kroka policies by board members (see Policies folder in 2026 Board Documents)*
- Acknowledge our policies and that we will abide by them
 - Sarah - will abide
 - Lela - will abide
 - Jacson - will abide
 - Daniella - will abide
 - Bet - will acknowledge electronically

Directors Support & Evaluation (Daniella & Sarah) Priorities (individually and collectively) for 2026

- Ezra
 - First goal is to be prepared and organized - in the past he has been so busy that he reacted to the calendar but wants to be pro-active. To this end Ezra has reorganized his desk/office so as to have less interruptions
 - Second goal is being available to people - staff are first priority
 - Third is finding the right balance between Kroka and family - so he can work at a pace that is sustainable for the long term.
 - So far - the experience has been to be pulled in three directions. Past students reach out requesting his time. Ezra doesn't want to be so busy he can't respond to them.
- Nathan - The change has been exciting. Nathan is spending a lot less time in meetings and a lot more time on creative projects. It is awesome to see all the new energy Ezra is bringing. And Humbling to see Ezra doing such a good job.
 - First goal: Nathan hopes Ezra and he settle into a way of working such that Nathan can still deliver on the direct leadership for which he's best suited
 - For so many years Nathan was in a support role - when Misha was director. Second goal: Is to make this transition a stepping forward instead of a stepping back into old ways - to truly be a Senior Director.
 - Nathan has a huge task list and the list keeps growing. "Already I wish I was here 7 days a week."
- Ezra noted that the board should ask him and Nathan at our next meeting how their working relationship is going? So far it's going fine. Please check with us again next time.

6. Other

Strategic Plan (Ezra & Sarah) -

- The strategic plan expires in 2026 - so this is a strategic planning year. We're considering having an external facilitator for this. We also need to evaluate how well we realized the vision set out in 2023. While a strategic plan is important - we don't want the process getting in the way of our co-directors settling into their roles. We can be flexible in timing. Ezra says a possible timeline is to set the framework in summer and write up the plan in the fall. The best time for large staff input is during the summer.
- Board members are invited to review the current strategic plan in the 2026 documents folder.

Board-Staff Interaction Opportunities for 2026 (Sarah).

- Sarah joined the first part of the staff meeting to provide a Board 101 presentation. Ezra said this was well received. One of the things we heard when we were gathering input for the leadership transition was that staff wanted more access to the board. Here are the ways:
 - *Kroka Events (see calendar overview)* - Board members are encouraged to attend
 - *Education Minute by staff* - Staff will take turns joining the board for this and each are invited to bring what they wish
 - *Posting of minutes to Krokadock (Nathan)*- This is new and will start this year.
 - *President "office hours"* - Sarah will set up in the farmhouse to be available

New Guest Board Member Questions - for us? For them? -

- Guests invited to say more about themselves as the original introductions didn't do them justice!

Alan & Sondra left the meeting.

Formal invitation to join the Board:

Consensus reached to officially invite Alan and Sondra to serve on the board.

Retroactive Pay update (Sarah)

- The Finance Committee will bring a proposal to the April meeting for how to best fulfill our intention to provide co-director retroactive pay by the end of 2026.

Next meeting April 7

Adjourned 8:40pm

Respectfully submitted - Daniella