

**Minutes of Special OISRA Board of Director's Meeting**  
**April 11, 2022**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Present:**

Eric Martin, Nordic Division, OISRA Vice-President (voting)

Laura Gentry, Alpine Division (voting)

Ryan Roper, Alpine Division Liaison, Treasurer (voting)

John Collins, Nordic Division Liaison (voting)

Jinny Martin, OISRA Board Secretary (non-voting)

Dave Munson, OISRA Executive Director (non-voting)

**Absent:**

Mike McManus, Alpine Division, OISRA President

A quorum was present. Meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

The purpose of this special meeting was to discuss organizational changes in OISRA because of the negative response from the OSAA Delegate Assembly to OISRA's request for skiing to become an OSAA Emerging Sport.

Prior to the meeting, the OISRA Executive Director, Dave Munson, had sent the Board members a document explaining why there is an urgency to meet and discuss organizational changes. (See Appendix A.)

MOTION: Ryan Rooper moves to call a Zoom meeting to bring together the members of the Alpine Steering Committee and the members of the Nordic Steering Committee with the Board of Directors for further discussion of proposed organizational changes. Laura Gentry seconds.

VOTE: Unanimous approval.

The Board set the date and time for the meeting: Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. They directed Jinny to send out a Zoom meeting invitation to the members of the Steering Committees and to include Dave Munson's document with the invitation.

John Collins volunteered to write a presentation identifying talking points distilled from this meeting that will help facilitate the discussion on the April 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. John's document will also be sent to the members of both Steering Committees.

Meeting ended at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted by  
Jinny Martin, Board Secretary

**Appendix A: Document sent to OISRA Board Members from Dave Munson, OISRA Executive Director, on April 9, 2022**

OISRA Executive Board,

Obviously, the Delegate Assembly's vote was very disappointing, and I feel it is important to share some details to help you process what happened before you start the process of assessing our next steps. If you want to skip the details of the Delegate Assembly meeting, you can jump down to "assessing our next steps" on pages 2 & 3 to review the urgent issues I believe are now before OISRA.

**Emerging Activity Application Process:** At beginning of the Emerging Activity process, we submitted an application as we understood the criteria at the time. Then COVID came upon us and the app was idle for a year. As the process resumed, it became apparent that we needed to revise our application based upon feedback from the OSAA Executive Board. They asked for updated data and clarifications in specific areas. Mike, Jinny and myself went through countless revisions in search of a product that the OSAA Executive Board approved. Personally, I felt very good about the application and we received feedback that validated it was well-prepared.

**Side-note about the relationship between the OSAA Executive Board and the OSAA Delegate Assembly:**

The OSAA Executive Board are paid staff that manage the administration of the OSAA, and the OSAA Delegate Assembly is comprised of volunteer Delegates are school representatives, one from each league of every classification, who establish the rules of OSAA. Primarily the 42 Delegates are superintendents, along with some principals. The OSAA motto is "schools rule." This means that the OSAA Delegate Assembly has the final say on what sports/activities are approved, as well as deciding policies.

Recently, the OSAA Executive Board have noticed that the numbers of students in OSAA activities is decreasing, and the Executive Board is looking for ways to improve those numbers. The Executive Board initiated the concept of "emerging activities," which, incidentally, is a concept that is being explored by many High School Sports Associations throughout the United States in response to declining numbers. Three years ago, the Delegate Assembly agreed with the Executive Board's **concept** of allowing for "emerging activities," but we were their first test case for reviewing an emerging activity. The Executive Board was supporting our application process and helping us present information they thought could be received favorably by the Delegate Assembly.

**Presenting OISRA information to the OSAA Delegate Assembly:** While it was a respectable submittal, obviously it did not result in a positive reception. In fact, there was not one discernable positive comment or advocate in the Delegate Assembly audience. The Executive Board members who introduced me were objective in their presentation and explanations, but the reception by the Delegate Assembly was entirely negative. [If you are interested in watching the presentation, you can go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZFOs-Ze88&t=10032s> @ 2:18:14] You can hear for yourself that without making references to the data we had provided, they had "off-the-cuff" comments about costs for transportation, internal operational work, potential insurance, salaries for coaches, etc. A superintendent from Tillamook estimated that it would add \$48,000 to his school budget for 6 boys and

6 girls to ski. It is difficult to understand that Tillamook would consider skiing would be viable based on their location, but he set the tone for the discussion of costs.

Some also seemed to feel that if OSAA accepted skiing, they would be obligated to provide it regardless of whether it was realistic for that school. This thinking led to the comment that “there are not enough mountains in Oregon” to make it equitably available for all students in the state.

There were no comments that acknowledged or represented schools that currently support skiing. It was very apparent where this was going and I asked that “as OISRA skiing is already in well over 50 schools, I’m curious as to how those schools may feel regarding potential added costs. And could anyone speak to that?” I received one response which did not effectively answer the question. One member stated that their district had to cancel winter events due to lack of bus drivers and had no idea how they could add more transportation needs on top of what they already had.

Comments also indicated a lack of understanding of the Emerging Activity concept, which OSAA Executive Director Peter Weber responded to. There were inaccurate comments and assumptions made that I could not respond to and certainly could not debate in this format. In a rush to judgement, a negative motion was made and seconded while another question was being asked. Vote was a unanimous “yes” vote to deny the request.

Jinny watched the livestream; thus, we reviewed the event afterwards and came away with identical observations.

- The superintendents are the ones in charge of school district budgets, and a perception of additional cost was their primary concern. [Even if the costs might not be prohibitive initially, they were certain that in the future the costs would be prohibitive.]
- Superintendents have the ultimate power in the hierarchy of schools, and opinions of athletic directors carry no weight. [All AD’s we had talked to were in favor of OSAA adopting skiing.]
- In hindsight, we could not think of any ways we could have improved on our application or presentation, given the process that was available to us.
- There is no longer any point in pursuing inclusion in OSAA.

**Assessing Next Steps:** While I try to be optimistic as much as possible, I’m a realist at heart and I can read the handwriting on the wall. When we began the Emerging Activity process, you may recall that I shared a document titled “An Organizational Crossroad Assessment.” (I have added that document at the end of this message, for your reference.) I identified our “administrative workload” as an issue we must face. We now can clearly see that OSAA and schools will not take on administrative duties for us. Additionally, it is now clear that we are actually supporting mostly school club and community teams, with few exceptions. While there are schools that still embrace OISRA as a true high school sport, they are the exception with no future guarantees. It is not realistic to expect those types of relationships to increase, and they will more likely decrease. Yet we have built an organization that supports all teams based on the model of how a few exceptions are supported by their schools and OSAA guidelines.

We need to re-examine who we are and where we are going and the work needs to start right away before another season is upon us. It is time to reexamine numerous policies and associated work that are rooted in an OSAA/school activity identity such as academic eligibility, coaches training, governance

maintenance, etc. that are not required and now appears to provide little benefit to our primary objectives. I realize this comes as a surprise and I certainly did not anticipate it, but I believe another door just opened as the other closed. I strongly feel the Executive Board needs to wrestle with the future of high school ski racing and provide direction. I think the work might involve modifying or rewriting Bylaws and Policies, and possibly voting by the membership for some changes – and this work must be done so that changes are clearly in place prior to fall.

I suggest the following assessments can be some starting points:

1. Assess what type of organizational structure could reduce administrative workload. Can we get rid of a layer of administration?
2. Assess which policies and rules are required for school club and community teams, recognizing the uniqueness of each school situation. Is it OK that we do not have consistency for all schools?
3. Recognize how our insurance situation affects our organizational structure.
4. Assess which policies and rules are determined by insurance providers' requirements. Should those who hold insurance policies be the ones making those policies and rules?
5. Think about what types of decisions should be made at what levels of the organization – league level vs organizational level, for example.

Some goals that I feel are important:

- 1) Keep the program looking the same for the racers. Make administrative changes that affect only the work that goes on in the background.
- 2) Keep the guiding principle that we “meet the kids where they are at.” Focus on our successful formula that has included being inclusive and highly competitive, and don't concern ourselves with concepts about what high school sports “ought” to look like.

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### **An Organizational Crossroad Assessment by David Munson (May, 2019)**

What has recently happened with OSAA is an interesting evolution. For many years, acceptance into OSAA realm required an activity to be in 75% of the schools. A while back, it was reduced to 50 schools. Regardless of the reduced benchmark, very few activities have been added over a long time.

While high school ski racing was not an OSAA sport, it enjoyed a very favorable status in most school districts for very long time. In some schools it was practically on equal status with OSAA activities. This began to change in 2012 when the Oregon State Board of Education stopped vetting schools' extra-curricular activities. The responsibility then fell to the schools. It is reasonable to say that few schools are likely performing a comprehensive vetting of their non-OSAA activities.

It is also reasonable to assume that many school districts are trusting OISRA's compliance with rules and regulations because of our reputation and record of annual approval by Oregon State Board of Education. Our standing in these schools is still very favorable but it is lacking in verified approval within

the school system. While these relationships are currently positive and could continue to be so for a long time, there is little assurance. In contrast, some schools have already taken a much more conservative approach. Their lack of motivation and/or resources to perform vetting coupled with the recognition of the risks and liabilities inherent to that approach has led them to reduce their exposure and distance themselves from these activities. As you know we have teams that are no longer officially associated with a school.

We are also seeing long standing valuable relationships lost as turnover occurs with schools' leadership and athletic directors. Our reputation and record often has less meaning to their replacements and they have been charged with reducing liability exposure. Unfortunate but understandable.

It appears that OSAA recognizes that the current climate is not conducive to bringing on new programs. You have school districts holding activities at arm's length due to liability concerns which suppresses a program's growth which is coupled with a difficult to achieve benchmark. We believe OSAA has brought forward a good plan with the Emerging Sports ruling and it's Provisional Status. An unknown factor to all involved is to what degree the schools will embrace these "emerging" activities. And is very difficult to assess without giving them a chance to thrive; ergo, the provisional status.

While high school ski racing is hardly an emerging activity, it is stuck in the void that has been resulted from the aforementioned past events. Having survived our insurance scare and still enjoying good relationships in most schools, it would be nice to hope for smooth sailing for a while but there may be troubled waters ahead.

One of management's major obligations is planning for the future. To do that let's take a look back into how our society has changed over the last 50 plus years of OISRA's life. It was a much simpler time with fewer regulations and lawsuits. Organizational administration was a fraction of what is required now. Now every year there are new regulations and standards that need review for inclusion in our programs. Now multi-million dollars lawsuits are common. Now there are privacy laws, FERPA forms, cyber concerns, background checks, a laundry list of required training that grows every year and many more changes. At the top of these concerns is the insurance associated with all of these risks which we painfully experienced this past year.

A tremendous amount of work behind the scenes goes into managing all of this and anything left incomplete leaves OISRA open to additional liability. It might be surprising to know OISRA has not had all of their coaches complete their required training for a number of years. The potential consequences for these types of shortcomings will only grow. The growing burden of this demanding administrative work load falls to our small and mostly volunteer staff.

This leads to another important factor of the present and future. OISRA has been blessed with an exceptional group of dedicated volunteers, but the times are a' changing. I am here instead of Richard is one example. We are all getting older and I'm sure there are folks on the Board that are wondering how long they will continue. I know I will not be here as long as Richard was. Not even close. While there are very capable people to take our places, it seems unrealistic to expect to find replacements that will take on the level of commitment and administrative workload requirements that is now needed. And certainly not at the compensation of the past.

One consideration is that OISRA anticipates higher costs for operational and administrative activities. That assumes finding qualified personnel that will ensure regulations compliance.

I would like to provide a different perspective. I feel Oregon high school ski racing is currently at crossroads for all of the reasons brought forward. It is also my opinion that our current business model is not sustainable for the long term. Anyone in business for the last 30-40 years knows the financial risks of the administration and liability of today's current environment. And it will likely continue to grow.

We can plan on dedicating additional funding in the future to accomplish our needs internally for staffing, legal support and insurance which is a likely fallback position. However, I think it is time to explore becoming part of a larger organization that has these resources already; a paid staff, legal counsel and more leverage in the insurance environment. OSAA by virtue of the respective school districts and US Ski and Snowboard are both legitimate options to consider.

With the current OSAA opportunity at hand, it is worthy of investigation. If we apply to OSAA, it is very hard to anticipate how all of this may play out. Obviously, it would be great if the schools districts wholeheartedly embraced high ski racing but there is no guarantee. Alpine is in a better position than Nordic in regards to current school relationships. The schools will have the power as the principals sign on for what OSAA activities they will support.

It would be a difficult situation if we ended up in some OSAA middle ground where some schools accepted us and others did not. We would have to maintain almost all aspects of the organization including administration, legal and insurance in this scenario. If that were to happen, US Ski and Snowboard would have to become a serious consideration if the desire is to be part of a larger organization.