

Rarity Bay Women's Club Monthly Meeting Minutes

Location: Rarity Bay Club House

Date: February 3, 2026

Start Time: 10:00 AM

I. Welcome and Introductions

- Shelley King, the new President of the Rarity Women's Club, welcomed attendees, wishing everyone a Happy New Year, and introduced the new board members.
- Attendees were reminded to turn off their phones, with a humorous "fine" suggesting it as a new fundraiser.

II. Guest Speakers

A. Newborns in Need (Introduced by Amanda Looney, Charity Coordinator)

- **Speakers:** Sarah Johnson and Carol Steed from Newborns in Need of East Tennessee.
- **Mission:** A national charity with 40 chapters, providing essential items to babies born into poverty and premature babies. East Tennessee is one of the most active chapters.
- **Context:** Approximately 1 in 7 babies in America, and 1 in 5 in Tennessee, are born into poverty. Additionally, 1 in 10 babies in Tennessee are born prematurely, often correlating with financial crisis.
- **Services:**
 - **Baby Kit Bags:** Distributed to five area hospitals (LeConte, Sweetwater, UTMC, Fort Sanders, Oak Ridge) and pregnancy resource centers (about 40 bags/month). These bags serve financially dire situations, emotionally vulnerable mothers, and those experiencing traumatic births.
 - **Bag Contents (Premie Bag example):** Diapers (newborn to 3 months, 18-24 per bag), wipes, hats (5-inch caps), diaper/wipe holders, burp cloths, bibs, tiny preemie socks, two blankets (receiving and sleep sack), and a quilt/afghan (36x36). Special items for NICU babies include octopus toys (to prevent wire pulling) and special slow-flow nipples/bottles for preemies.

- **Safe Sleep Education:** Every bag includes a card with safe sleep guidelines to raise awareness and decrease the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- **Bereavement Services:** Offers burial pouches, bereavement shawls, memory bracelets, and envelopes for families experiencing stillbirths or infant loss.
- **How the Club Can Help:**
 - **February Baby Shower:** Coordinated by Connie Williams, an Amazon Wish List will be shared for direct donations of needed items (especially baby girl clothes).
 - **Volunteering:**
 - Sewing/Crocheting hats, octopuses, blankets (patterns available).
 - Attending monthly meetings in Farragut (1st Thursday, 4 PM) to bundle diapers, wrap soaps, pack bags, and take inventory.
 - Delivering bags to hospitals and centers.
 - **Contact:** NewbornsinNeed.org (website), social media (Facebook/Instagram).

B. Appalachian Trail Conservancy (Introduced by Jan Muir, Vice President)

- **Speaker:** Ann Sentz, Regional Manager for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) in North Carolina and Tennessee (managing 165 miles).
- **Personal Connection:** Ann shared her personal journey, hiking 1700 miles of the AT with her father, and how it inspired her career.
- **About the Appalachian Trail (AT):**
 - Nearly 2,200 miles long, spanning 14 states (Georgia to Maine).
 - Receives an estimated 3 million visitors annually.
 - Considered a unique unit of the National Park System – "the longest and skinniest national park unit."
 - Passes through diverse landscapes, including Great Smoky Mountains National Park, national forests, and even near urban areas like the New York City skyline.

- **ATC Mission:** To protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail through collaborative efforts with federal entities (Forest Service, National Park Service) and crucial local trail clubs (e.g., Smoky Mountain Hiking Club).
- **ATC Focus Areas:**
 - **Protect:** Acquiring land and protecting scenic view-sheds around the trail.
 - **Experience:** Ensuring responsible and sustainable recreation, including promoting Leave No Trace principles and developing protected campsites.
 - **Belong:** Engaging a wide range of people in the ongoing effort to preserve the trail.
- **Specific Programs in the Smokies:**
 - **Ridge Runner Program (February-October):** On-ground educators and stewards who patrol the 73 miles of AT in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. They pick up trash, maintain backcountry facilities (like composting privies), provide guidance and advice to hikers, and assist in emergencies. These staff are trained in wilderness first aid.
 - **Trail Crew (May-October):** Seasonal staff who perform arduous physical work maintaining remote sections of the trail (over 5 miles from road crossings). Tasks include cutting back vegetation, building steps, and installing water control features to prevent erosion. They work 8-day shifts, camping in the backcountry.
- **Hurricane Helene Impact & Recovery:**
 - The hurricane caused extensive damage, including destroyed bridges (e.g., Nolichucky River crossing), uprooted trees, and suspended trail sections.
 - **Recovery Efforts:** A rapid response involved fundraising for professional saw crews, providing grants for volunteer tools and safety training, establishing a temporary hiker ferry, and expanding trail crew operations.
 - **Resilience:** The focus is on rebuilding the trail to withstand future disasters, exemplified by the complex reconstruction of a staircase near I-40 using volunteer labor and high lines to move heavy stones.

- **Call to Action:** Encourages people to enjoy the trail and emphasizes the extensive volunteer and collaborative efforts behind its maintenance. Contact: AppalachianTrail.org.
- **Interactive Game:** Jan Muir led a short game asking attendees to produce common hiking essentials from their purses (map, flashlight, sun protection, fire starter, shelter).

III. Club Announcements and Updates

- **Vice President (Jan Muir):** Announced that the speaker for next month's meeting will be the Tennessee Aquarium.
- **Webmaster (Naomi Barndt):** Apologized for a recent email communication error and requested grace as she learns the system.
- **Treasurer (Jennifer):** Reported 354 members, with 292 having paid their \$30 annual dues, leaving approximately 62 unpaid. The club budget is \$25,925.
- **Social Events (Amy):** Requested volunteers to help plan and host social events. The first social event will be a pop-up at "Sweet and Sassy" (home decor/gifts) in Madisonville on Thursday, March 5th, from 6-8 PM, featuring treats and wine. A potential outdoor social at Fontana Dam is being considered for a warmer month.
- **Greeters (Penny and Regina):** Announced their role as "greeting directors" and are actively looking to identify and welcome new residents of Rarity Bay, planning future get-togethers for them.
- **Bereavement (Michelle):** Shared the sad news of the passing of two members: Linda Blair (former RBWC VP and President, instrumental in the "Dining with Panache" cookbook) and Terri Beyer (renowned seamstress). Sympathy cards were sent to their families.
- **Birthday Bash (Tracy Edstrom):** The next Birthday Bash for January and February birthdays will be on February 11th at the Country Club, offering free cake (lunch on your own). Attendees can sign up online or at meetings.
- **Learning Lab (Cindy and Yvonne):**
 - **Upcoming Event:** A guided tour of the Sequoyah Museum (celebrating Sequoyah, inventor of the Cherokee written language) on Tuesday, February 24th, for \$10 (max 22 attendees).

- **Rescheduled Events:** A dementia caretaker presentation and the Loudon Lock tour will be rescheduled and announced.
- **Ideas & Volunteers Needed:** Solicited ideas for new learning labs via email (rdwc.learninglabs@gmail.com) and sought members willing to teach knitting or crocheting classes to create items for Newborns in Need.
- **Lunch Bunch:** The next gathering is on March 11th at 12:00 PM at Calhoun's in Lenoir City. Reservations are made by dropping off a check to the treasurer, which is returned at the luncheon.

IV. Meeting Close

- Shelley King thanked all speakers and board members, expressed gratitude to the Country Club for hosting monthly meetings, and looked forward to seeing everyone next month.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: March 3, 2026, 10:00 AM

Location of Next Meeting: Rarity Bay Country Club

Minutes submitted by Heather Risany, Secretary

Date: February 4, 2026