

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Board Members in virtual attendance: Ian Bartelmez, Mike Depies, Andy Ducato, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Dennis Fleischer, Todd Schaller, and Bruce Urben. Excused: Jim Freck, Joe Gonyo, Russ Olson, and Pat Smith,

Also virtually present: Bruce Ross

Agenda:

- **6:31 PM – Meeting Convened**

- **6:32 PM – WWA Demographics Survey**
The Development Committee brought forth a plan to survey WWA members to determine membership desires regarding event types, most desired prizes, etc., while at the same time helping WWA better understand membership demographics (age, locality, interests, etc.). Development realizes this is a tool to help multiple committees and WWA's leaders and seeks input from all BoD members to produce a useful survey which WWA members will want to respond to. Kevin Banaszak (kevin.banaszak87@gmail.com) drafted initial questions which were forwarded as read-ahead material. BoD members are requested to provide additional survey questions (or refine any of the initial set of questions) to Dave Elwing (dwelwing@rcn.com) and Kevin Banaszak (kevin.banaszak87@gmail.com) NLT 12 May. We request the sender Cc all other BoD members when responding to Kevin and Dave to engender better awareness and avoid duplication. Dave Elwing will email the initial survey questions to BoD members to ensure everybody has the same starting documentation.

- **6:57 PM – Financial Report**
Bruce Ross provided a recap of the financial reports previously distributed to BoD members. In short, the finances are sound and are improving. Highlights included Green Bay's banquet doubling its Net goal, strong Class A results, Membership increases, 1st PPP forgiven, Waukesha's banquet is expected to be double that which was budgeted, \$25K vs \$10K), and \$7.5K is coming from the F&WS end-of-grant close-out transactions.
Based upon the strong financials, Ian Bartelmez asked if we could begin funding initiatives. Bruce Ross responded, "Yes." A motion was made and unanimously accepted to maintain the Executive Director's salary at the current PPP-supplemented level by utilizing General Funds when PPP funding ends.

- **7:12 PM – BBB Report**
It is believed that a Better Business Bureau (BBB) rating will assist WWA more easily obtain grant and donations because we will be a BBB-vetted non-profit. Bruce Ross provided read-aheads explaining the need for a formal evaluation program and an annual CPA's compilation (a light audit) of WWA's finances. Cost for the BBB accreditation/dues (approx. \$500) and compilation will be \$4,000. These are two separate actions: Ross would recommend the CPA – compilation regardless as we have in the past, except for 2019 when cost concerns led to just CPA-performed taxes. The BBB Review "cost" is a previous/continuing expenses. Actions were made and unanimously accepted for the tax compilation and Development of an Effectiveness Assessment. Upon finalization these requirements will be incorporated within WWA's Policies & Procedures Manual and within WWA's By-laws.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, April 21, 2021

- **7:27 PM Increasing Chapter Involvement**

Andy Ducato surfaced a recurring matter, “to be effective, WWA Committees need chapter-level participation.” Andy suggested that chapter participation on State-level committees be mandatory. All member agreed that chapter participation is highly desired. Bruce Urben and Bruce Ross disagreed with mandating -- preferring to encourage -- committee participation because it is not enforceable, and they believe it will be more damaging in the long run. Andy will draft chapter participation guidelines/requirements for discussion prior to the next BoD meeting. He will distribute them by email and set a meeting time to further discuss the matter. Further, he and George Ermert will draft a present a proposal for more Chapter involvement in Committees at the next BoD meeting.

- **7:58 PM– Director Engagement**

Bruce Urben reminded each BoD member of the expectations of a WWA BoD member (time, talents, and financials). This includes active participation at all state-level events, BoD meeting, Committees, major fund raisers, etc. He challenged each BoD member to self-assess their net value to WWA over the past 12 months.

- **8:10 PM – Committee Updates**

Education Committee (Bruce Urben presented): Following Andy Ducato’s resignation as Committee Chair, Bruce Urben will chair the Education Committee until a new Chairman is identified. The committee is drafting a 3 to 4 month newsletter series about sandhill cranes and the uniqueness of introducing hunting them within a nesting state. If Wisconsin gets a sandhill crane season we will be the only nesting state to also allow a hunting season. A Learn-to-Hunt in the Ripon area looks promising this year. Kevin Sandler and Lou (?) are leading the effort. Bruce Urben is in contact with UW Stevens Point regarding a Learn-to-Hunt in the Green Bay area. Ian Bartelmez inquired about spending funds to buy duck ID booklets and was asked to develop a proposal for review/approval.

Habitat Committee (Bruce Ross presented): Work continues on the projects database; the Statement of Work is being rescoped to be more manageable. Efforts continue to add projects to the queue, as well as to bring on a wild rice program coordinator (Bruce Ross is engaged in ongoing discussions with a possible candidate). Bruce Ross also mentioned that he is writing several educational articles (habitat program and EXPO) for the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Exploration continues through the Aldo Leopold Society to create a wetlands management/development resource similar to the “My Wisconsin Woods” resource.

Communications/Membership Committee (George Ermert presented): A membership drive is starting in May with a goal of adding 500 new online members. Outreach will be through Face Book ads, new merchandise, and swag. Dennis Fleischer asked if we have or could develop and automatic renewal membership capability. WWA does not, but Bruce Ross and George Ermert will explore the possibility. Bruce Ross explained that a letter goes out to every member prior to membership renewal but agreed an automatic process would enhance renewals. Further, the WWA website will receive modifications that make membership clearer and membership options easier to understand. George Ermert suggested that we re-examine some to the membership levels and associated swag to attract more higher contributing members.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Policy/Advocacy Committee (Bruce Ross presented): The move to increase the price of the Wisconsin duck stamp shows good legislative support primarily because of WWA and our partners moving forward with a consolidated message. The Knowles-Nelson initiative is achieving similar progress. Sandhill crane hunting efforts have slowed due to other initiatives, but efforts remain ongoing to meet with the International Crane Foundation (the largest potential opponent) and other groups to develop a path towards a season. Bruce Ross raised another legislative battle to change laws which prohibit crossing railroad tracks. This impacts many Mississippi River hunters but is really a statewide matter. George Ermert relayed that this is the 3d attempt to change this legislation, but unlike the duck stamp movement, there is not a consolidated front/message being transmitted to law makers by anybody other than the railroads who cite trespass, liability, and public safety concerns. WWA is being recognized within Madison and by other organizations as a legislative leader on behalf of waterfowlers and other sporting groups.

Development Committee (Not presented during the meeting but provided to update the Board): Work continues regarding a charitable giving message to generate long-term funding sources. A reach-out to all Chapter Chairmen was initiated to gauge interest in a monthly Zoom calls to share successful techniques, discuss ideas, identify areas where chapters can collaborate, increase membership (general and chapter committee). Only (3) responses were received but each recognized great merit in the idea. Tom Seibert will begin drafting “success tips” newsletter articles. The committee presented a demographics survey earlier in the BoD meeting and looks forward to the input from all BoD members. Multiple attempts, including a face-to-face meeting, were made to contact parties interested in starting/re-starting a Wausau Chapter; efforts will continue. The committee will solicit chapter feedback regarding the “Retain Funds at the Chapter Level” initiative and provide discussions and recommended actions to the BoD.

- **8:40 PM– EXPO Update**

Bruce Ross informed the Board that to date, the EXPO has commitments totaling over \$10K through sponsorships and booth sales. That puts it almost into the black. Wisconsin Outdoor News is onboard to advertise the EXPO and WBAY wants to sign-up as a media sponsor resulting in PSA spots and higher public visibility. Progress is being made on the MOU, but a hard-scrub legal review is still needed (Bruce Ross has this for action). A move was made, seconded, and accepted for WWA to purchase a major sponsor booth at the EXPO. Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben assured the Board that WWA will have prime real estate and visibility at the EXPO. The March BoD action item for a more in-depth EXPO volunteer requirement presentation at April’s BoD meeting (Todd Schaller for action) did not occur due to time constraints.

- **8:47 PM – NRA Affiliation**

Bruce Ross was approached during Waukesha’s event about WWA partnering with the Friends of the NRA in a shoot series across the state. In general, the Board acknowledged the merits of doing so, but requires more information to make an informed decision. Bruce Ross will explore the details and present them at the next BoD meeting.

- **8:52 PM – President’s Recap/Action Items**

Bruce Urben did a recap of tonight’s agenda and action items. Action items include:

- 1) BoD members are to provide feedback/recommendations to Dave Elwing (dwelwing@rcn.com) and Kevin Banaszak (kevin.banaszak87@gmail.com) NLT 12 May.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday, April 21, 2021

- 2) The BoD unanimously approved a motion to keep full-time employee salaries constant (at the current PPP-supplemented level) by utilizing General Funds when PPP funding ends.
 - 3) Regarding BBB certification, the BoD voted in favor of adopting a formal evaluation program and conducting annual CPA-led compilations (audits) of WWA's finances. Upon finalization these requirements will be incorporated within WWA's Policies & Procedures Manual and within WWA's By-laws by the Secretary.
 - 4) Bruce Ross will pursue a formal legal review of the Waterfowl EXPO MOU prior to the next BoD meeting.
 - 5) The Board unanimously approved a motion to purchase a Major Sponsor booth at the EXPO.
 - 6) Bruce Ross will explore the details regarding a potential collaboration with the Friends of the NRA on a sporting clay series and present them at the next BoD meeting.
 - 7) Andy Ducato will draft a proposal while working with George Ermert to present at the next BoD meeting regarding a plan for more Chapter involvement in Committees.
- **9:00 PM – Meeting Adjourned**
The next board meeting will be Wednesday May 19th from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM via Zoom.
The next Executive Committee meeting will be May 17th from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM via Zoom.