

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday January 19, 2022

Board Members in virtual attendance: Ian Bartelmez, Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Dennis Fleischer, Jim Freck, B.J. Grassmann (2022 candidate), Russ Olson, Todd Schaller, Pat Smith, and Bruce Urben

Unable to Attend: Joe Gonyo

Also virtually present: Kelcy Boettcher and Bruce Ross

Agenda:

- **6:33 PM – Meeting Convened**
- **6:34 PM – Financials Update**

December financials show a year-end profit of \$195,037 which is \$182,894 better than the budgeted year-end profit of \$12,143.

- **6:37 PM – 2022 Budget Discussion**

Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben introduced the FY22 budget discussion and Bruce Ross conducted a line-by-line explanation of FY22 funding opportunities to afford BoD members a better understanding of the proposal before them. Todd Schaller enquired as to how “Forecasted Chapter Budgets” are determined. The answer was, “Generally chapter goals are based upon a 3-5 year trend demonstrated by the chapter. Anomalies are considered so as not to over- or under-inflate budget goals. A chapter’s budget usually includes one in-person event (banquet, outing, bash, etc.) and to get to super goal requires one or two Class A raffles.”

The BoD was asked to allocate \$262K of unrestricted funds—this is a record amount in at least 6 years and likely much, much longer. Ian Bartelmez asked what the definition of “State Unrestricted” was regarding the budget categories. Kelcy Boettcher explained that “State Unrestricted funds are those monies not allocated to chapters, calendars, etc. ... in short, they are the State’s available operating funds.” Regarding the EXPO, Bruce Ross clarified that the EXPO is a separate budget line item and that no WWA money was used to run EXPO 21. Of note, Expo 22 already has over \$9K in sponsorships. EXPO funds are run through WWA because of WWA’s non-profit status, but they are not WWA funds.

Based upon December’s discussions, BoD members continued to support allocating \$100K as WWA Operating Capital, \$70K as WWA Reserve, and \$8K for Internal Grants. All agreed that the proposed \$16K for staff bonuses was low and concurred with raising the amount to \$20K.

A significant discussion occurred about the proposal to increase HRP’s retainer from \$1.8K/month (pandemic reduction) to \$2.6K/month. Increasing the retainer helps ensure that HRP remains available for WWA projects as opposed to HRP taking on non-WWA work to remain solvent. The habitat work HRP performs is a critical component of WWA’s mission. Increasing the retainer does not directly increase HRP’s bandwidth to do more habitat projects, but it might afford Peter greater flexibility --- his gas mileage for conducting site visits approaches \$1-000/month alone. A brief discussion occurred as to whether we should seek out a second source to augment HRP’s abilities, but the

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Board agreed that it would rather see HRP bring on another employee than for us to seek another vendor. Bruce Ross pointed out that to date, though, the weak link in habitat projects has not been HRP's availability or bandwidth, but rather WWA's ability to identify good habitat projects.

The Temporary Administrative Support proposal (\$4K) will provide a stand-in support person for the periods that Kelcy is out-of-the office and to augment should additional assistance be needed. \$4K will provide roughly 200 man-hours support.

\$2K for Advocacy Software subscription was not supported by the Board for FY22 because the legislature is going out of session soon the software would not be able to be implemented this year. George Ermert did his best to explain the merits of the Advocacy software - an "easy button" for WWA members/website users to reach out to their legislative representatives to project prepared support or opposition messages that WWA's Policy team drafts. While all saw merit in the software, no large policy/legislative issues appear to be looming in 2022. WWA can purchase the subscription for 2023 if needed without any loss to mission capability in 2022.

\$18K for Website Update/Makeover was another lengthy discussion to first grasp what was needed, and then to begin to understand the size of the undertaking. All Board Members agreed that updates are needed to refresh the eye appeal, but more importantly to make the website easier to navigate. Few Board Members have experience (through other venues) updating a website and understood the full context and the amount of work that will be required of WWA's staff, Directors, and other volunteers. Kelcy Boettcher will most likely be the lead for the revamp; this will be in addition to her already busy schedule. WWA staff/volunteers will need to review current content, write new content, and direct linkages for the new website. The website designers will take our input and apply it to the infrastructure they create. In the end, WWA will have full control and accessibility to update, post, and delete content without web designer support. George Ermert and Dennis Fleischer asked if quotes had been solicited. Todd Schaller recommended the \$18K be left in the proposed budget and that several quotes be attained to ensure appropriate funds are set-aside. All agreed with that course of action.

Board members supported the EXPO Gold Sponsor (\$1.5K), New Chapter Initiative (\$1K), Chapter Leadership Initiative (\$1.5K), and Membership Drive (\$1.5K) were supported with little question.

The Wood Duck Box Replenishment (\$4K) proposal also received a fair amount of discussion. In past years donations (cash and wood) were sought to off-set wood duck boxes and, for all intents and purposes, cost WWA nothing to offer. It was previously thought that the Manitowoc Chapter raised \$1K to off-set wood duck boxes in FY22, but there was no record of anything being fenced for that purpose. Ian Bartelmez and Pat Smith volunteered their time and portable sawmills in the event wood could be located. Dave Elwing argued that if wood is not found either we will need money to buy it or we will run out of wood duck boxes to sell. Any wood duck boxes that are sold can off-set the \$4K budget line and either be put towards 2023 wood duck boxes or returned to

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Unrestricted funds. The Board supported including the \$4K budget opportunity. (Early wood acquisition is needed so kits/boxes can be cut and prepared for sale.)

In summary, The Board supported the following funding opportunities as proposed: \$100K Operating Capital, \$70K Reserve, \$8K Internal Grants, \$12K Staff compensation increase, \$10K HRP retainer increase, \$4K Temporary Admin Support, \$18K Website update/makeover, \$1.5K EXPO Gold Sponsor, \$1K New Chapter Initiative, \$1.5K Chapter Leadership initiative, \$1.5K Membership Drive, and \$4K Wood duck box replenishment. The Board chose to increase the Staff bonus funding opportunity from \$16K to \$20. The Board also chose not to fund an Advocacy software (\$2K) purchase.

- **8:10 PM – Chapter Oversight**

Bruce Ross and Dave Elwing reintroduced the chapter oversight discussion to the Board. In short, during 2021 the WWA staff became aware that two inactive chapters hosted education-focused events (Prairie du Chien members conducted a mentored hunt and Wausau members supported a locally sponsored hunting Heritage Day) under the WWA banner, but without any sanctioned, state-level knowledge of the events. Previous discussions brought to light concerns about liability for injuries or misconduct, potential misappropriation, and use of WWA funds, as well as the realization that such events, if properly conducted do fall within WWA's education and recruitment mission areas. Further, that such low-impact events could be a means to re-start viable chapters.

Bruce Ross explained that there was no concrete document to present during this meeting but asked the Board's latitude to assemble a 3-person tiger team to further examine to situation to return with three documents for the Board's consideration. The documents will be: 1) A revised Chapter Charter; 2) A document that defines a variety of chapter types (all fund raising), and 3) a document that discussed implementation of the proposed charter structure. The tiger team will consist of a WWA staff member, a BoD member, and a chapter member. Bruce Urban volunteered to be the BoD member; Bruce Ross will be the WWA staff member. They will seek a chapter member.

Ian Bartelmez asked about the WWA funds that Prairied du Chien has received through an employer-matching program and how the funds are being used. Other questions regarding what courses of action WWA might have to prevent non-sanctioned use of WWA's name, etc... The tiger team took these concerns for action.

- **8:20 PM – 10-Gun Raffle**

The West Allis and Waukesha Chapters plan to hold a high-end, 10-gun Class A raffle limited to only (500) \$50 tickets, but in light of supporting the greater good, asked if the BoD would like this to be a statewide raffle to be used to replace the defunct statewide hunt raffle. If adopted as a statewide raffle, chapters would be able to sell tickets and receive credit/recognition throughout the year in the same manner that they receive credit/recognition for calendar sales. Concerns were voiced about a Statewide Gun Raffle distracting from gun raffles planned for chapter events, and the need to cover the cost of those local guns (i.e., "only a finite amount of money walks in the door"). Mike Alaimo has a commitment from his vendor that all ten guns will be set aside (guarantees no substitutions) only the first gun is paid for in advance. The vendor will accept payment of the remaining guns can be paid the night of the drawing.

The BoD agreed that making this a statewide raffle would not enhance West Allis and Waukesha Chapters' marketing plan, and that the West Allis and Waukesha Chapters should proceed with this as a joint-chapter effort.

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- **8:31 PM – Plan to Auction (3) Original Les Didier Paintings**

Bruce Ross brought a plan to auction the (3) Les Didier original pieces of artwork at the Copley art auction in July. Board approval is required for the Executive Director to sign the auction agreement. Of note, Copley Fine Art Auctions normally charges a 20% auction fee (20% of the “hammer price” goes to the auction house to pay for their services), however, because WWA is a non-profit Copley will donate 12% of the hammer price to WWA. WWA is responsible for shipping the pieces to Copley. Dave Elwing volunteered to contact a long-time friend, Russ Fink of Russell Fink Gallery in Virginia, for shipping and package recommendations. As a reminder, WWA auctioned a fourth piece through an internal online auction during 2021 and only realized \$700 on a painting that was appraised at \$900. Todd Schaller motioned (Pat Smith seconded) that the Executive Director sign the auction agreement. The motion was unanimously accepted.

- **8:42 PM – President’s Recap/Action Items**

Bruce Urben’s recap of the evening’s agenda, action items, and decisions includes:

- 1) FY22 Budget – FY22 Budget opportunities were accepted as presented with two exception. The Staff Bonus was increased from \$16K to \$20K, and the purchase of Advocacy Software was postponed until 2023 or a more apparent need became evident.
- 2) Chapter Oversight – Bruce Ross will lead a 3-person tiger team that includes a chapter-level member (TBD), a BoD member (Bruce Urben), and a Staff member (Bruce Ross)
- 3) 10-Gun Raffle – The BoD agreed that West Allis and Waukesha chapters should proceed with the 10-gun raffle as a chapter-level event.
- 4) BoD approved the Executive Director’s signature of the agreement between WWA and Copley Fine Art Auctions to sell the remaining three pieces of Didier artwork.
- 5) Dates for 2022’ BoD meetings will be discussed during the in-person Annual Meeting at the Beaver Dam Conservation Club.

- **8:50 PM – Meeting Adjourned**