

**Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Saturday February 5, 2022**

Board Members in physical attendance: Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Dennis Fleischer, Joe Gonyo, B.J. Grassmann, Russ Olson, Todd Schaller, Pat Smith, and Bruce Urben

Virtually present: Ian Bartelmez

Also physically present: Kelcy Boettcher and Bruce Ross

Agenda:

- **12:32 PM – Meeting Convened**

- **12:33 PM – Introductions**

B.J. Grassmann was introduced as a new 3-year term Board member. B.J. already stepped into a leadership role as the Habitat Committee lead following Jim Freck's departure from the Board of Directors (BoD); B.J. has been an active member on the Habitat Committee for the past year. Each of the Board members introduced themselves and stated where they are from, duration with WWA/on the Board, and explained their primary Board member responsibilities.

- **12:35 PM – Committee Assignments**

Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben used this opportunity to review which Board members are on each of the state-level committees (Policy, Education, Habitat, Marketing / Membership, and Development) and to provide an overview of each committee's functional responsibilities. Committee members were asked if they wanted to shift their levels of contribution or focus. All chose to remain on their present committee(s). Bruce Ross asked Pat Smith to think about which committee he would like to affiliate with. Bruce Urben expressed great interest in bringing Pat onto the Education Committee. Todd Schaller expressed an interest in assuming the role as the Education Committee Lead.

Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben expressed their mutual pleasure with each committee's progress, input, and willingness to work together. Some committees are more solid, while others remain in the "storming/forming/norming stages.

Relative to bringing new blood onto committees, or more specifically the Board, Ian Bartelmez nominated Kevin Banaszak (past Midland Chapter Chair & current Development Committee member) to become a BoD member. Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben will contact to Kevin to ensure that he understands WWA's expectations of a BoD member and that he can commit to the role. IAW the Board Nomination process, they will engage Kevin and bring recommendations to the Board for a vote (they spoke to Kevin slightly over a year ago). Currently, the BoD has (2) 1-year vacancies and (2) 3-year vacancies.

- **12:50 – FY22 Meeting Dates**

The Board of Directors will meet at 6:30PM – 9:00PM on the 3d Wednesday of each month (March 16, April 20, May 18, June 15, July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, November 16, December 21). Meetings will continue to be virtual unless otherwise specified. Bruce Ross expressed interest in conducting September's BoD meeting as a face-to-face event on a weekend; a determination will be made at a later date.

The Executive Committee will meet at 2:00PM – 3:00PM on the Monday preceding BoD meetings (March 14, May 16, July 18, September 19 and November 14). Meetings will continue to be virtual unless otherwise specified.

Committees/sub-committees will schedule meetings around BoD and Executive meeting dates.

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- **1:00 PM – 2022 Budget Approval**

During the January BoD meeting Directors agreed that the year-end State Unrestricted balance of \$246,000 be allocated as follows:

- a. \$100,000 as WWA’s operating capital to ensure adequate cash for WWA operations.
- b. \$70,000 will be held in reserve in event of “rainy days” (roughly 4-5 months’ operating costs with zero income).
- c. \$20,000 for Staff bonuses based upon 2021 performance.
- d. \$8,000 for chapter internal grant program funds.
- e. \$1,500 for EXPO 22 sponsorship.
- f. \$2,500 for chapter leadership and development initiatives.
- g. \$1500 for initiatives intended to grow membership.
- h. \$4,000 for wood duck box inventory replenishment, if needed.
- i. \$18,000 for website redesign (towards end of 2022 or beginning of 2023).

The remainder of State Unrestricted Funds, with the noted exception of staff bonuses that will be distributed in February (item c. above), will be held for potential use for high ROI initiatives. The remainder of these planned expenditures are NOT in the FY22 Budget’s Income Statement, but will be shown as expenditures in the monthly reports when they are actually expensed. Until then, funds will remain part of the “State Unrestricted” balance.

Bruce Ross provided the Board with a draft FY22 WWA Operating Budget developed based on Board’s acceptance of proposed chapter goals and projected WWA expenses including:

- a. A staff salary increase of a cumulative \$12,000 (approximately 10%) over 2021 levels.
- b. An annual HRP retainer increase to \$2600 per month.
- c. Temporary administrative help of a total of \$4,000/year.
- d. Staff bonus distribution in February.

Bruce Ross expressed concern about placing the Capital Expenditure Funds on the Income Statement and the potential to misinterpret the lower ledger numbers as a drop in revenue/organizational efficiency. After a significant discussion the BoD agreed that the Capital Expenditure Funds should be reflected in the Income Statement and expanded upon as needed in the monthly budget recaps.

Todd Schaller asked how the Reserve Fund would be isolated from other cash assets. Kelcy Boettcher stated that a separate budget line can be created for the Reserve to ensure transparency.

Bruce Urben suggested that perhaps a process should be established to access Reserve Funding. Following a lengthy discussion, the BoD agreed that because WWA’s By-laws already require the BoD to approve and oversee an annual budget, and because Reserve Funds will only be accessible with through Board approval, no further approval process is required. Bruce Ross stated that he will explore the BoD’s concerns and ensure that a means to display (ensure transparency) the Reserve Funds is included in the posted budget.

George Ermert motioned (Dennis Fleischer seconded) that the Board accept the FY22 Budget as delineated in Draft 2 with the inclusion of a separate Reserve/Rainy Day budget line. The Board unanimously voted in favor of the nomination.

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- **1:10 PM – State Raffle Updates**

10-gun Class A raffle. The West Allis and Waukesha Chapters are moving forward with the 10-gun Class A raffle and are limiting sales to only (500) \$50 tickets. As discussed during the January BoD meeting, the state will assist with sales and implement a means by which chapters that choose to sell tickets will receive credit/recognition throughout the year in the same manner that they receive credit/recognition for calendar sales.

UTV Raffle. The FY22 budget includes a line item to cover the cost of the UTV and trailer for this year's state raffle. Cost is roughly \$13K. The UTV and trailer are forecasted to be here during late-February/early-April. Tickets will be sold online, by chapters, and at EXPO 22. The winning ticket will be drawn on August 28th during the Hunter's Eve Bash at the Beaver Dam Conservation Club.

FY23 Calendar Raffle. Bruce Urben secured donated decoys from (13) Wisconsin decoy carvers; one decoy per month will be featured as the half-page calendar picture. Member-submitted photos will still be included within the body of the calendar. The carvers unanimously agreed that WWA should use their carvings to raise funds beyond that of calendar sales. Bruce Urben stated that the average value of each decoy was \$200-\$300, with several being likely to be valued at \$700 to \$800. The Board discussed potential marketing opportunities (E-bay, online live or silent auctions, separate Class A raffles) and advertising avenues (decoy forums that target collectors and other carvers, Facebook advertisements, by-lines or stringers included on the calendar photo indicating where/how interested calendar holders will have a chance to win/bid/buy the decoy). Bruce Ross, George Ermert, Rob Monette, and Bruce Urben will develop marketing options and present them to the Board at a later date (Calendars go on sale in June).

- **1:33 PM – Organizational Review**

As directed by the BoD in January, Bruce Ross presented a notional plan of action to review WWA's chapter charter structure and oversight procedures based upon the decreasing number of "traditional" fund raising focused chapters and the perceived desire to allow a chapter structure that is less focused on funding raising and more focused on organizing and performing activities that align to WWA's educational or habitat missions. During 2021 two instances occurred where active WWA members, that are not currently affiliated with an active chapter, hosted education-focused events under the WWA banner. While well-intentioned, these events occurred without any sanctioned, state-level knowledge or approval. Previous discussions brought to light concerns about liability for injuries or misconduct, potential misappropriation, and use of WWA funds. On a positive note, such events, if properly conducted add to WWA's education and recruitment mission areas and may a path to re-start or create new chapters in areas that WWA does not have a presence.

To date, WWA has never cancelled or revoked a charter, nor has WWA ever revised a charter. B.J. Grassmann noted that times are changing and that WWA's recognition of this and our willingness to offer various levels of involvement can be seen as a good thing to entice broader participation. Additionally, he noted that the Board retains the ability to tweak or change organizational structure/charters as needed. The mechanisms by which we might institute these changes were discussed (i.e., Do we simply cancel all charters and re-issue new ones? Do we "advertise" this action as an "upcoming organizational change" and slowly incorporate new charters amongst chapters in a tiered manner? Do we include wording within the charters that identifies levels of legal recourse in the event that chapters do not comply with the parameters being established ... all agreed that any changes need to reinforce the "positive" and avoid and negative connotations? etc.)

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The Chapter Organizational Review proposes that a 3-person (minimum) team to: 1) Examine the current state of WWA Chapters and their activity levels; 2) Draft a tiered chapter structure that accounts for varying degrees of chapter participation/activities below the perception of a “traditional” fund raising chapter; and 3) Present recommendations and an implementation plan to the BoD during May 2022. Volunteers for the ad hoc review team include Bruce Ross (Chair), Ian Bartelmez (Director/Chapter member), Dennis Fleischer, and B.J. Grassmann. Todd Schaller volunteered to contact Randy Falstead (Wausau area, retired warden and former WWA chapter member that organizes the Youth Hunter Heritage Day) to see if he would be interested in participating. Dennis Fleischer also suggested the team reaches out to a sub-set of high school or college-age members for a more youthful set of ideas.

- **1:47 PM – Committee – Committee Updates**

Policy/Advocacy Committee (Bruce Ross presented) Representative Born’s Policy Maker of the Year (PMOTY) award will be presented February 9th at the Beaver Dam Conservation Club; the date for Governor Evers’ award remains TBD. The Sandhill Crane (SHC) Bill will come to a Legislative Hearing on February 14th. It is unlikely to be moved far enough through the legislative process this year to come to a vote. The good news is that this Bill is getting plenty of visibility. The Policy Committee has done its due diligence and met with every Democrat and is aware of their concerns/intentions and understands what changes can be initiated to move the Bill forward during the next legislative session (current session ends in March). To put the effort into perspective, when a SHC Bill came forward ten years ago, it never made it out of the Committee level. Through this and other efforts, WWA is becoming recognized as a leader in Madison.

Education Committee (Bruce Urben presented): The committee updated its Newsletter Plan for 2022 to include scientific paper reviews, a “Wood Duck Series” for educators to use with their students, monthly recipes, another SHC article (potentially), what to do with old taxidermy mounts, plus a number of others. Additionally, the committee plans to focus on the means to implement the DNR R3 grant funds by expanding Learn-to-Hunt opportunities, and by attracting women and persons of color (R3 grant targeted demographics) to the EXPO. The committee is also exploring options with the Hunt for Food organization where participants attend multiple class periods that introduce them to conservation, hunting and the biology and life history of species while also getting hands-on experience shooting and learn how to properly handle firearms Partners include the Wisconsin Foodie and the DNR.

Development Committee (Dave Elwing presented): The Development Committee identified several focal points for 2022. These include continued development and implementation of the Planned Giving in a Box legacy gifting program, expanding the types of corporate sponsorships we offer targeted entities (WWA/state-level, EXPO, Project-focused), and an update to our Media Package to more easily market WWA to prospective sponsors. The committee will complete the 2021 demographic survey and present findings and recommendations to the BoD, state-level committees, and Chapter Chairs.

Habitat Committee (B.J. Grassmann presented): B.J. accepted the committee reigns from Jim Freck this past month and presented the Habitat Committee’s 2022 Goals. The wood duck box program has a low inventory that may result in a shortage of boxes being available in 2022. The committee is pursuing corporate sponsors, as well as identifying alternative wood sources. We are fortunate to have a strong distribution/delivery process for boxes and can efficiently distribute the boxes we hold in inventory. The Habitat Committee continues to develop a spreadsheet to track wood duck box locations and production across the state. B.J. reported that during 2021 WWA completed 11 habitat projects impacting 93 acres of wetlands. The

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committee wants to grow that number in 2022 and concurrently go to project benefactors and solicit long term support for WWA (financial or physical as active member). The Habitat Committee approved six new projects in January. The wild rice program took a hit this year due to low rainfall and a poor harvest resulting in WWA only receiving 100 of the 800 lbs. of wild rice ordered. B.J. expressed concerns over a single-source point of failure and its impact to WWA's efforts. The committee will examine how to use the wild rice program as a future revenue producer. Regarding the Public Lands Program (PLP), the committee will examine how to partner with the DNR to manage tracts like the Glacier Habitat Restoration Area, so the DNR pays WWA to manage DNR contractors and funds earmarked for wetland areas. Lastly, the committee acknowledges the need to broadcast WWA's habitat "wins" to members and (of equal if not greater importance) to non-members, so WWA is more readily recognized within the state and better equipped to recruit similar-minded members and sponsors.

Marketing/Communications Committee (George Ermert presented): George reported that WWA is on track to achieve the "5,000 Facebook Likes" goal (we are at ~4.4K already; up from ~2K a little over a year ago). The committee will conduct two membership drives in 2022. The committee will begin the process to revamp WWA's website this year, as well as continue efforts to expand WWA's presence/awareness on social media and podcasts.

- **2:43 PM – EXPO Update**

Bruce Ross reported that the EXPO is making timely progress. Half of the presentation sponsor opportunities are already filled, and the EXPO has received ~\$10K in commitments. Federal Ammunition signed on as a Major Sponsor. It appears the EXPO is on track to yield between \$30K-\$40K, if 3K-4K people attend.

- **2:50 – New Business or Questions**

Dennis Fleischer asked if WWA explored the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC). ERTC falls within the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). It encourages employers to keep employees on the payroll as they navigate the unprecedented effects of COVID-19. The maximum credit per quarter is \$7,000 per employee. Bruce Urben asked Dennis to bring this question to the March BoD meeting. Dennis will engage Bruce Ross and Kelcy Boettcher for salary and budget-related details, and any other pertinent information needed to conduct an informed ERTC discussion.

- **2:52 PM – President's Recap/Action Items**

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

- 1) Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben will contact Kevin Banaszak relative to coming onto the Board of Directors and bring their findings/recommendations to the Board in March.
- 2) The Board sets dates for 2022's BoD and Executive Group meetings.
- 3) The Board approved the FY22 Budget and directed that a line item identify and track Reserve Funding.
- 4) The Board received updates on the Waukesha-West Allis 10-gun Raffle, the statewide UTV Raffle, and the 2023 Calendar Raffle. A team (Bruce Ross, George Ermert, Rob Monette & Bruce Urben) will explore marketing options to achieve the greatest financial gain from the donated calendar decoys.
- 5) Chapter Oversight – Bruce Ross will lead a team (Bruce Ross – Lead, Ian Bartelmez, Dennis Fleischer, and B.J. Grassmann) to explore an alternative organizational charter structure for WWA. Todd Schaller will approach Randy Falstead to also participate in the charter discussions (Randy is the retired warden and past WWA member in the Wausau who

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organizes an annual Youth Hunting Heritage Day event that receives support from several past Wausau area WWA chapter committee members).

- 6) Dennis Fleischer will engage Bruce Ross and Kelcy Boettcher and prepare an Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) eligibility discussion for the March BoD meeting.

- **2:55 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting via Zoom at 6:30-9:00 PM on March 14th.