

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday November 16, 2022

Board Members virtually present: Kevin Banaszak, Ian Bartelmez, Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, B.J. Grassmann, Todd Schaller, and Bruce Urben

Also virtually present: Bruce Ross and Kelcy Boettcher

Unable to Attend: Dennis Fleischer, Joe Gonyo, Russ Olson, and Pat Smith,

Agenda:

- **6:34 PM – Meeting Convened**

- **6:35 PM – Previous BoD Minutes**

The Board unanimously approved June's minutes.

- **6:36 PM – Executive Meeting Minutes**

The Executive Committee met on November 14th. Minutes were posted on the Association secure webpage. Bruce Urben asked the Directors if anybody had questions. George Ermert asked if the topics would be discussed during this BoD meeting, to which Bruce Urben responded, "Yes." There were no further questions.

- **6:37 PM – Financial Report**

Directors were afforded the opportunity to review the financial report, spreadsheets, and explanatory notes prior to the meeting. No questions regarding the financial report were asked. Bruce Ross noted that several events conducted earlier in the year still needed to be reconciled.

Calendar sales are ahead of last year's YTD sales. Rob Monette will make a hard push for final sales and stub/money collection post-Thanksgiving. Historical sales are between 4,500 and 4,800 of the available 5,000 calendars. George Ermert emphasized the need to maximize sales so as not leave unrealized revenue (\$4,000 - \$6,000) on the table. Bruce Ross noted that this year's improved tracking will minimize unrealized revenue from distributed while also allowing shifting calendars to better selling areas/people, if needed. He cautioned that we already tapped into the 500 "reserve" calendars; the Association must account for all sales so as not to exceed our stated 5,000 calendar sales cap. George Ermert asked if we have a year-to-year metric by which to compare sales. Kelcy Boettcher stated that 2021 YTD confirmed sales were 767 and this year's YTD sales are 1,083.

Ian Bartelmez raised comparisons to the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF), Ducks Unlimited (DU) 2022 calendars. WWF calendars, like WWA's, are being sold for \$20, but unlike WWA, WWF will only "payout" if 7,000 calendars are sold. Short of 7,000 sales will result in buyers receiving refunds for their purchases. Regarding this, Ian Bartelmez suggested that WWA plays off WWF's shortcoming by printing "Guaranteed" on our 2024 calendars to highlight the lack of risk and to potentially capture a wider audience. WI DU's 2023 calendar prices increased from \$50 to \$60 this year. Doing so allows WI DU to offer more lucrative prizes but may also eliminate an uncertain number of buyers.

- **7:08 – Executive Director's (ED) Report**

Bruce Ross presented a verbal Executive Director's Report.

Planned Giving in a Box (PGIAB) Update. Postcard #2 will go out to the "Top 200" shortly, as will targeted emails, and all-hands newsletter advertisements. George Ermert asked if Hall of Fame members are in the "Top 200." Bruce Ross confirmed that they are, as well as Volunteers of the Year, WWA Founders, and all Directors. He went on to state that WWA is on the cusp of realizing our first appreciated stock donation through PGIAB. Russ Olson continues to lead PDIAB efforts and is committed to do so for the foreseeable future.

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WDNR Public Land Ecologist Update. Bruce Ross informed the Board that WWA is nearing contract finalization for the Public Land Ecologist position. A highlight of the negotiations is that WWA's cash layout may be as little as \$6K/year (vice the forecasted \$16-\$18K) based upon \$6K in matching EXPO funds and WDNR's willingness to credit WWA for organizational and administrative support provided by WWA's staff. WDNR's Acquisition Branch must review the contract, as must the State Department of Administration (DOA). Governor Evers's re-election is expected to provide political appointee stability, thus retaining much of the groundwork achieved to date. DOA approval could be received by the end of December, allowing potential recruiting to begin as soon as early December. George Ermert asked when WWA could announce the position. Bruce Ross believes that (assuming DOA approval), WWA will be able to announce the position jointly with WDNR near Christmas. Another negotiated contractual highlight is that WWA can submit monthly invoices. Bruce Urban commented that the position is a huge step for WWA and noted that it will help hunters gain access to future hunting opportunities. Bruce Ross's final comment was that the contract is between WWA and WDNR ... meaning the BoD has final approval authority.

Waterfowl EXPO Update. The EXPO Steering Committee met and discussed professionalizing EXPO support, suggesting that Bast-Durbin manage all vendor booth sales. Bruce Ross continues to contact vendors to be EXPO and also WWA sponsors, concurrently developing marketing materials. George Ermert asked if Bruce presented himself as "WWA ED" or "EXPO Chair" when he asks potential sponsors for support. Bruce Ross stated that he asks as the EXPO Chair and as the WWA ED. A good example of this approach is the success with Vortex (\$1.5K for the EXPO and \$6K for WWA). George Ermert asked why WWA wasn't following up separately and went on to say that we [WWA] need to do more with all of the vendors. Bruce Ross agreed with his point and stated that establishing diversification for WWA's funding stream is a personal goal before he leaves the ED position.

Ian Bartelmez encouraged separating the EXPO from WWA to realize better fiscal and sponsor benefits; Bruce Ross and Todd Schaller noted that the EXPO is a joint venture. Perhaps in the future we may choose to separate it, but the EXPO is too immature to do so now. Further, WWA continues to gain great benefits from the relationship (i.e., \$6K EXPO funding for WWA's Public Land Ecologist).

Kevin Banaszak asked if we do anything to entice sponsors. Bruce Ross confirmed that sponsors receive booth discounts and varying levels of on-site EXPO marketing at the EXPO and in WWA publications. Kevin posed a similar follow-up regarding WWA sponsorships to which Bruce Ross noted that WWA sponsor perks vary based on the level of sponsorship. The WWA Media Kit details the benefits but went on to acknowledge the media package needs to be updated to reflect WWA's recent accomplishments.

Bruce Urban reminded the Board that one of the expectations of each Director is that he identifies at least \$5K for WWA. George Ermert asserted that, "as an organization we need to do a better job of raising money and that the responsibility goes beyond those of us on the call. We need to look to the future, and we need money to do that." Based upon the discussion, Dave Elwing suggested that, "perhaps it might be time to consider adding another paid staff member (either part-time or full-time) to WWA... a Director of Marketing or a Major Donor Director." Ian Bartelmez cautioned about spending funds for such a position. Bruce Ross acknowledged that the ad hoc committee formed by the Executive Committee to examine staff compensation to be on par with similar non-profits could also discuss the potential of such a position in the future.

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Beaver Dam Land Acquisition (Information only). A number of years ago WWA was offered a 17-acre parcel between Hwy 33 and Beaver Dam Lake by its landowner with the thought of the land being set-aside for recreational use and management by WWA (similar to the Abram's property). Discussions recently renewed via Rob Monette and the landowner who went so far as to contact a lawyer/personal friend to assist in the land transfer. A plan needs to be developed as the property holds the potential to be managed as a "Little Abrams." Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben confirmed that WWA will follow "an Abrams management approach" (private land open to public use, managed by the local WWA chapter – Marshland Chapter). Benefits to WWA include access to area for LTHs/R3 activities, community relations, marketing options/discussion points for corporate/foundation donations, etc. George Ermert asked if the Board could be provided property specifics (i.e., assessed value, exact boundaries, etc.). Dave Elwing stated that an online search of county GIS parcel records will provide that data. Bruce Urben reminded everybody that we are still very "young" in this discussion, and that roughly five years ago negotiations stopped because the parcel's prior use remained undetermined. Should the land turn out to be a previous dump site for garbage or hazardous materials, WWA would incur clean-up responsibility/liability. Bruce Urben went onto to say that a phased plan is needed prior to moving forward, but cautioned that regardless of all else, WWA cannot incur risk because of the acquisition.

Director & Officer Elections. Director positions held by Kevin Banaszak, Mike Depies, George Ermert, Russ Olson, and Pat Smith expire on 31 December 2022. Directors were asked to notify the President of their desire to remain or leave the Board prior to December's BoD meeting. Should new candidates be identified, the ED and President will conduct interviews and forward eligible candidates to the Board per Association Bylaws. There are several vacant Director positions that can be filled in addition to the five opening positions. Director nominations are voted on by Board members and Chapter Chairs prior to, and announced during, the Annual Meeting.

Officer positions for the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer also reach the end of their 2-year term on 31 December. Bruce Urben desires to be re-elected. Todd Schaller and Dave Elwing both expressed interest in retaining their positions unless somebody wished to assume their roles/responsibilities. Russ Olson previously indicated that he was undecided, but that he will continue to lead the PGIAB initiative. Officer elections will be held during the Annual Meeting.

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF) Delegate Discussion. WWF inquired as to whether WWA would be filling the (3) Delegate seats allocated to us by our organizational size. Bruce Urben and Bruce Ross are WWA's active delegates. Participation consists of physical attendance at WWF's annual meeting and virtual attendance at 1/4ly Zoom meetings. WWF, like WWA, has several standing committees, but Bruce Urben does not encourage WWA delegates to participate due to the few number of items of interest to WWA. WWA Executive Committee, Directors, and/or WWA's organizational committee members (Education, Legislative/Policy, Habitat, Marketing/Communications or Development) were invited to serve as WWA Delegated. George Ermert asked what the benefit of serving as a WWF Delegate is to WWA. In short, the answer is "Awareness." George Ermert, Bruce Ross, and Bruce Urben agreed to meet off-line and assess potential benefits WWA might gain from increased participation. WWA Delegates must to be able to effectively represent WWA's positions and be current within WWA discussions. *(Background: WWF was founded in 1949 and has historically been a leader in conservation by working with sports clubs, citizen volunteers and policy makers to ensure Wisconsin's outdoor heritage will be available for current and future generations. Membership*

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consists of 20-25 outdoor organizations that collaborate to represent interests and address legislative matters of concern to all Wisconsin outdoors men and women. WWF's political influence has waned within recent years, while WWA's – seen by our recent rallying of "hook & bullet" organizations – has increased. WWF desires WWA's continued support/presence.)

- **7:48 PM – 2023 Financial Planning (Bruce Ross & Kelcy Boettcher)**

The goal is to have the FY/CY 2023 budget in place in January. Bruce Ross presented the 1st tier spreadsheet (Event month/Reconciliation month/Budget expectations/5-year average/2023 Goal [10% above 5-year average]/2023 Super goal [Goal + \$1.2K+Class A], Calendar sales, Statewide Raffle, and ten Class A raffles across the year). Ian Bartelmez asked if the BoD would consider eliminating the stand-alone UTV raffle and incorporate it as a Christmas Day Bonus Prize and suggested increasing calendar sales to \$25.00 to cover the cost of the UTV, trailer, and still increase realized calendar sales revenue. Bruce Ross acknowledged these as good points and invited Ian Bartelmez to be on the ad hoc 2024 Calendar Committee. Bruce Ross invited Directors to be part of an ad hoc 2023 calendar sales review committee.

- **7:66 PM – Committee Reports**

Policy/Advocacy Committee (George Ermert presented): Policy Committee meets on November 17th. Agenda items include election result discussions and assessing WWA's forward movement.

Habitat Committee (B.J. Grassmann presented): Habitat Committee met on November 16th. The Habitat Committee's 2023 Goals are: Wood duck box program, Public Lands Ecologist, and Land/AWA/Wild rice program growth. Anticipated budget requirements were also presented. George Ermert asked what metrics were established for the wood duck box program. B.J. Grassmann explained box usage is tracked by organization (chapters and private parties – when known) and estimated hatch rates. George Ermert refined his question to ask what the program's metrics are to determine cost and return on investment (ROI). B.J. Grassmann explained that the committee tracks the numbers of boxes given to chapters and sold to individuals. Price points are designed to make the program self-sustaining. George Ermert further asked what the program's sales goal (i.e., number of boxes to sell) is, insisting a number goal is needed. B.J. Grassmann restated that the program's goal is to be self-sustaining, not to reach a certain number of sales. Bruce Urben asserted that box production costs are \$11.55 based upon 2022 material costs, donations, and shipping. Boxes will be sold at \$40 per box/\$35 per unassembled kit (up from 2022's \$30 and \$25, respectively) to realize self-sustainment.

Education Committee (Todd Schaller presented): The Education Committee plans to conduct (3) LTHs in 2023 (Green Bay, Southeast, and Southwest) to maintain ongoing activities and increase waterfowling awareness with an identified budget request for \$2.4K. There may also be a yet-to-be determined need for Wood Duck Box lesson plan funds. Tactacam agreed to provide discounted cameras to schools participating in the wood duck nesting program. B.J. Grassmann praised the Education Committee's efforts and progress on this initiative.

Marketing/Communications Committee (George Ermert presented): The committee recently kicked off the Fall Membership Drive by contacting members whose memberships lapsed within the past three years and asking them to renew for 2023. Kelcy Boettcher confirmed that seven renewals already occurred. This is the first time that WWA specifically target lapsed membership holders. *KUDOS!* George Ermert also reported that the drive's Face Book paid advertisements start on November 17th. WWA is spending \$250 for paid advertisements with a recruitment goal of 50 new memberships. The committee has one new member, a professional marketer who noted that WWA's marketing successes far exceed "industry standards" for similar organizations. (Again, *KUDOS!*) Bruce Urben asked if the committee's 2023 goals and

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budget requirements are similar to 2022's. George Ermert confirmed they will be similar, but details need to be worked out.

Bruce Urben asked Bruce Ross if he had a deadline for committee budget requests; Bruce Ross asked to have budget requests NLT December 15th. Todd Schaller asked all committees to send their goals and budget requests to all Board Members when the information is sent to Bruce Ross to facilitate informed discussions during the December 21st BoD meeting.

Development Committee (Dave Elwing presented): The Development Committee tentatively identified the following 2023 goals: (5) fiscal-related goals (Increase sustaining memberships by 15%, Mature PGIAB/Legacy giving, identify one recurring \$25K annual donation, identify one recurring under \$25K donor, and identify two new WWA sponsors); (4) organizational growth-related goals (one new-start chapter, mentor/assist both 2022 new-start chapters [Nicolet & Rio], mentor/assist Midland Wings Chapter, and identify a successor for the Baraboo River Chapter); and conduct (2) chapter development/training sessions. Anticipated budget requirements are \$500 (two Meet & Greets @ \$250 each) and \$300 (two event planning, execution tracking, and reconciliation training sessions @\$150 each) for a total of \$800.

- **8:25 PM – 2023 Planning Goals (Bruce Ross)**

Bruce Ross thanked the committees for their 2023 planning to date and requested finalized goals and funding requirements NLT December 15th so he and Kelcy Boettcher can work the proposed FY/CY23 budget for December's Board meeting. Bruce Ross, Kelcy Boettcher, and Rob Monette will continue to refine WWA's 2023 operating requirements, and projected funding streams.

- **8:26 PM – Annual Meeting (Bruce Urben)**

The Executive Committee discussed annual meeting "where" and "when" options ranging from status quo (Beaver Dam Conservation Club early in the FY/CY; Hold it in conjunction with EXPO 23; Or hold it concurrently with another WWA event). Bruce Ross confirmed that the Beaver Dam Conservation Club is available on 28 January. Ian Bartelmez and Mike Depies stated that the conservation club was a good venue which met our needs, and that the timeframe was good. B.J. Grassmann also pointed out that the conservation club is centrally located and easily accessed. Bruce Urben suggested that if the Annual Meeting was conducted on January 28th, a separate January BoD meeting could be eliminated by conducting the Board meeting immediately prior to the Annual Meeting. Kevin Banaszak asked if the conservation club cost WWA anything and offered the Newburg Sportsmen's Club as a similar venue. Bruce Ross responded that we use the conservation club free of charge, but there is a minimal food cost. Dave Elwing motioned that the Annual Meeting be held at the Beaver Dam Conservation Club on January 28th and that the January Board meeting also be conducted on the 28th immediately before the Annual Meeting. Ian Bartelmez seconded the motion. The Board unanimously voted in favor of the motion.

- **8:33 PM – New Business (Bruce Urben)**

Dave Elwing asked the status of 2022 Hall of Fame Nominations. Bruce Ross reported that the HoF Committee received only one nomination (a self-nomination). The committee has yet to meet, but with only one nomination, the committee could choose either to accept the sole nomination as this year's HoF recipient, or to recommend that a 2022 HoF inductee not be identified.

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Dave Elwing also asked the status of earlier discussions that Marv Tibbets be considered for WWA's 2022 Volunteer of the Year." Bruce Ross responded that the Volunteer of the Year is typically a WWA Staff nomination and that Marv Tibbetts is a solid candidate.

Todd Schaller announced that the WDNR recognized WWA's Jackson Marsh handicap blind initiative in a news release on November 16th. *KUDOS* to Mike Depies and his team!

- **8:38 PM – President's Recap/Action Items**

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

- 1) A Beaver Dam land parcel acquisition/development plan is needed prior to moving forward.
- 2) BoD and Executive Committee Officers whose terms expire on December 31st are requested to provide your intentions to the President prior to the December Board meeting.
- 3) The Board discussed WWF delegates without a resolution. George Ermert, Bruce Ross, and Bruce Urben will sidebar and provide further discussion for the Board during December.
- 4) Committee CY/FY23 goals and budget requests are due to the Executive Director (Cc all Directors) NLT December 15th for inclusion in the draft budget to be presented during the December 21st Board meeting.
- 5) The Board unanimously agreed to hold the Annual Meeting on January 28th at the Beaver Dam Conservation Club. January's BoD meeting will be held the same date.

- **8:41 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting via Zoom at 6:30-8:30 PM on December 21st.