

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday December 21, 2022

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

Also virtually present: Bruce Ross and Kelcy Boettcher

Unable to Attend: George Ermert, Dennis Fleischer, Joe Gonyo, and Pat Smith

Agenda:

- **6:31 PM – Meeting Convened**
- **6:33 PM – Previous BoD Minutes**

The Board unanimously approved November's minutes.

- **6:34 PM – Financial Report**

Directors were afforded the opportunity to review the financial report, spreadsheets, and explanatory notes prior to the meeting. WWA is roughly \$30,000 ahead of budget at \$214,567 with \$14,000 expected to come in from December events. Bruce Ross reminded Board members that the Board moved \$70,000 into a "Rainy Day" reserve and fenced \$100,000 as operating capital during FY/CY 2022. Russ Olson asked what type of interest WWA draws on the \$70,000; Kelcy reported that on the entire budget WWA received \$125 interest for November. Russ Olson suggested the Board consider placing the reserve funds into a money market account which currently yields 3.8% vice the 0.5% we receive now. Doing so could realize ~\$270 per month on the \$70,000. The Board agreed it was a good approach. Todd Schaller asked if the \$100,000 operating funds were sufficient during 2022. Bruce Ross responded that in general they were, but that we may need to consider a higher operating balance for 2023 due to the Public Lands Ecologist position and potential R3 Grant impacts.

Regarding 2023 Calendar Raffle sales, to date ~3,000 calendars have been sold and monies received by Kelcy with another 1,100 sold, but monies have not yet been received by Kelcy. Approximately 1,400 calendars are unsold, of which only 900 may be sold to reach the 5,000 calendar cap. The accounting places 2023 sales roughly 200-600 sales ahead of 2022 calendar sales at this same time last year. Bruce Urben commended everybody involved on the positive impact.

Rob Monette asked for Board guidance regarding 2024 calendar content (format, featured theme, photos, information, merchandise, price, etc.). Ian Bartelmez raised the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation pricing format (must sell 7,000 calendar or all monies will be refunded) versus WWA's guaranteed raffles as a highlight to WWA's solvency and customer appeal. He also suggested that WWA consider raising prices and include a UTV as the 2024 Christmas Grand Prize in lieu of holding a separate UTV raffle which consistently yields a low return on investment. Bruce Ross suggested a 2024 ad hoc calendar committee; Kevin Banaszak, Mike Depies, and Dave Elwing volunteered to work with Rob Monette to discuss 2024 calendar improvements and then to report their recommendations to the Board.

- **6:51 – Executive Director's Report**

Bruce Ross presented a verbal Executive Director's Report.

Beaver Dam Land Acquisition. Discussions regarding acquisition of the Beaver Dam property are temporarily on hold at the landowner's request. Russ Olson asked if the landowner was serious about the transfer because a similar thing happened in 2012 when discussions never materialized in a transfer. Ian Bartelmez suggested that Rob Monette engage the landowner directly so as not to repeat a lost opportunity. Bruce Ross attempted contact through phone and email to which the landowner provided an email response indicating his desire to work his land

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manager to ensure the land would be used in such a manner as his father would like and ensuring good land stewardship. Bruce Ross contacted land transfer and real estate lawyers regarding the formalities of land transfer and stated that he did not feel comfortable with asking Rob to broker the deal when Rob was not party to these discussions. Kevin Banaszak suggested naming the property after the landowner's father to help broker the deal. Bruce Ross will provide further updates during January's BoD meeting.

Sandhill Crane Legislation. The Policy Committee met with the authors of last year's Bill (Representative Tittl & Senator Felzkowski) to discuss a way forward in 2023. Rep Tittl initially wanted to immediately reintroduce the Bill while WWA's George Ermert urged him to hold off until new Senate and Assembly members could be educated on the science of conservation and fiscal impacts associated with SHCs. Doing so will (hopefully) enable a rational versus emotional vote. Ian Bartelmez spoke in favor of "going in guns blazing while new legislators are young and stupid." Todd Schaller and Dave Elwing supported educating the legislators. Bruce Ross noted that Hunter Nation took the "guns blazing" approach last year and failed. Repeatedly failed attempts generally result in legislation being dropped. Bruce Urban noted that good progress was made last year and asked that the Policy Committee continue its approach to educate by reference to the science of conservation and explaining the fiscal impact that SHCs will continue to have if no hunting season were to be signed into law.

Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting will be in-person and conducted at the Beaver Dam Conservation Club. Bruce Ross noted that Taylor Finger and possibly Amy Shipley (the new WDNR State Biologist) will attend and provide presentations. Ian Bartelmez suggested also inviting Dr. Sarah Orlofske and Dr. Robert Jadin from UW Stevens Point to attend and speak.

7:11 - Waterfowl EXPO Update

The EXPO Steering Committee continues to meet and is seeking ways to professionalize EXPO support. Swift Waters, a marketing firm, was hired last year. As discussed during November's Executive Director Update, the Steering Committee suggesting that Bast-Durbin, LLC manage all vendor booth sales. Toward that end, Bast-Durbin provided a contract and statement of work proposal for the Steering Committee's acceptance. WWA Directors were asked to review the documents prior to this evening's meeting. Bast-Durbin proposed booth management services for \$14,000 with a discounted price to \$12,500. Bruce Ross stated that the Steering Committee believed the discounted price be high, but also that the need exists, and the fee is manageable (The EXPO has over three times the funds need already available without receiving any 2023 EXPO exhibitor fees, etc.

Ian Bartelmez and Kevin Banaszak encouraged getting additional estimates prior to deciding. Dave Elwing asked what the sense of urgency was (was it simply to get back to Bast-Durbin because the EXPO Steering Committee already had the proposal for roughly 30 days, or were there operational impacts to delaying decision)? Bruce Ross explained that the real impact was to getting existing and new exhibitors and donors confirmed. He informed the BoD that the EXPO Steering Committee already addressed each of the concerns being raised by the BoD and believed that due diligence was performed. The matter was before the Board as a matter of procedure because the WWA Executive Director is a WWA employee at the same time he is the head of the EXPO Steering Committee. Bruce Urban and Todd Schaller also pointed out that one of the Board's ongoing concerns was how much the EXPO pulled the Executive Director away from WWA business; hiring Bast-Durbin will free up Executive Director EXPO time. Another benefit of this contract will be that WWA gets rights to full contact information for every vendor that participates in the EXPO, thus further assisting the Executive Director's task to identify and

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land additional WWA sponsors. A motion was made by Russ Olson and seconded by B.J. Grassmann to allow the WWA Executive Director to sign the contract as proposed. The vote carried six to two. The “Nays” were Ian Bartelmez and Kevin Banaszak.

- **7:35 Public Lands Ecologist Contract**

Bruce Ross met with the WDNR on December 19th. The funding requirements expressed in the sole-source contract are consistent with the information previously presented to the Board. Russ Olson asked what the contract timeframe (duration) was. Bruce Ross explained that it was a 2-year contract with a 3rd year option. Dave Elwing asked about equipment requirements (i.e., computer, vehicle, insurance, etc.). Bruce Ross explained that until recently WDNR planned to provide a computer, but a snag arose. The presumption is that the Public Lands Ecologist will use his own computer and vehicle (reimbursed for mileage). Any costs towards these items, as well as Bruce Ross’s, Kelcy Boettcher’s or Peter Ziegler’s time devoted to this effort count towards WWA’s annual 25% required contribution.

Todd Schaller motioned, and Ian Bartelmez seconded a motion to have the Executive Director accept and sign the Public Lands Ecologist contract as proposed. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

The WDNR and UWSP will help advertise the position. Bruce Ross posted the position description to LinkedIn and stated that he already received a number of interested

- **7:46 – Director Nominations**

Director positions held by Kevin Banaszak, Mike Depies, George Ermert, Russ Olson, and Pat Smith expire on 31 December 2022. Each expressed a desire to continue. Additionally, there are (3) vacant seats. Jim Freck expressed a desire to come back onto the Board and Mr. Kim Shady also expressed interest. All parties were asked to get updated bios to Kelcy Boettcher in the near future to allow distribution and review prior to January’s Board meeting. Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben will contact Jim Freck and Kim Shady to explain expectations of Board members, as required by the Association Bylaws. Board members and Chapter Chairs will be afforded the opportunity to vote on Director nominees.

- **7:49 – Committee Planning Goals**

Bruce Ross displayed a consolidated list of each committee’s 2023 goals and budget requests. Committee Chairs presented any additional information, new goals, or explanations of the listed goals. Directors were afforded the opportunity to ask questions, make comments or seek clarification on the materials presented.

- B.J. Grassmann applauded the Wood Duck Box lesson plans developed by the Education Committee.
- Dave Elwing pointed out that each Director will be asked to be a Sustaining Sponsor as part of the Development Committee’s financial goal to double Sustaining Sponsorships. He also highlighted that 2023’s Planned Giving in a Box goals were already funded through the Association’s 2022 contract.
- No questions were posed to the Habitat Committee.
- The Communications & Marketing Committee provided a run-down of December’s activities. Bruce Urben asked about apparent lags in making posts and also commented upon the number of inappropriate posts that appear. Ian Bartelmez noted that George Ermert’s schedule during election season understandably impacted his ability to stay on top of posts, but that the newest member of their committee – a professional podcaster – will be of great assistance in the future. Ian also explained to the Board members that

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we each have the ability to flag and delay inappropriate posts by hitting the “Report to Admin” option (the ellipsis symbol [...] beside each post).” To overcome posting lags, the committee will develop planned updates with a six to seven week lead time. Bruce Urben asked that the planned updates be added as a committee goal. When asked about the frequency of updates, Ian Bartelmez stated the goal is to do weekly updates. Regarding the committee’s Website Reboot goal and the proposed \$10,000 budget request, Bruce Ross stated that the Board will need at least three estimates [and an explanation of services to be performed] prior to being able to commit resources, including an assessment of the impact on staff time. While initially thought to have limited impact on the staff, Kelcy Boettcher explained that the last re-boot required significant amount of staff involvement.

- Bruce Ross stated that the Policy Committee goals were missing support to the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program as an effort that needs WWA support.
- “Other Initiatives” listed included initial steps to develop a staff compensation plan that will be on par with other non-profits of WWA’s size. Speculation was rendered that the total step-up might entail a 5-year plan, but that the goal is to complete recommendations for Board review and decision during FY/CY 2023 to implement starting in FY/CY 2024.
- Next Steps. Bruce Ross asked that all committees refine their goals to enable a Board decision on funding prioritization during the January Board meeting. Todd Schaller asked that Committees flag any goals that will impact staff time/resources; Bruce Ross agreed.

- **8:20 PM – 2023 Financial Planning**

Bruce Ross and Kelcy Boettcher provided amplifications to November’s FY/CY Budget presentation. Draft 1 includes the Bast-Durbin EXPO contract, Public Lands Ecologist position, R3 Grant impacts, and WWA normal operating costs. Bruce Urben asked if staff bonuses or compensation increases were included. Bruce Ross explained that they are not as those are within the BoD’s purview. The report was provided for Board awareness/information. No decisions are requested until the January Board meeting. Bruce Urben asked when the Board could expect to have a proposed budget to review. Bruce Ross anticipates being able to provide “pretty close to FY/CY 2022 budget close-out numbers by the 2d or 3d week of January.

- **8:27 PM – New Business Request for WWA’s Support of Hunter Education Instructor Recognition Events**

Dave Elwing was approached by his Hunter Education Team Lead to see if WWA would help support a Hunter Education Instructor Recognition Banquet in Kewaskum for the Dodge, Washington, Fond du Lac, and Sheboygan County instructors. Generally, the Board concurred that support to the Hunter Safety Instructor Program is a good thing for WWA, especially if we want to tap HS Instructors to assist with LTHs. The Board also agreed that if given, support needs to be targeted statewide versus to a singular regional event. Dave Elwing will research details regarding the type of support desired and return to the Board in January.

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

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

- 1) An ad hoc Raffle Calendar committee will stand-up to assist Rob Monette develop the 2023 calendar. Kevin Banaszak, Mike Depies, and Dave Elwing volunteered to be on the committee.
- 2) The Board agreed to allow the Executive Director to sign the Bast-Durbin EXPO vendor booth management contract (6:2 vote).
- 3) The Board agreed to allow the Executive Director to sign the WDNR/WWA Public Lands Ecologist contract (8:0 vote).
- 4) Directors seeking re-elect/nomination need to provide updated biographies and statements as to” why” they want to be a Board member to Kelcy Boettcher (no deadline assigned; Secretaries recommendation is NLT 9 January 2023).
- 5) The Board reviewed draft FY/CY 2023 financial planning spreadsheets. Bruce Ross and Kelcy Boettcher will present a proposed budget and prioritized funding recommendations during the January Board meeting.
- 6) Regarding the request that WWA support upcoming Hunter Education Instructor Recognition events, Dave Elwing will gather more information regarding the scope and type of support desired and present the information for decision during January’s Board meeting.

- **8:42 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

Next BoD meeting will be a face-to-face meeting at the Beaver Dam Conservation Club on January 28th.