**Board Members virtually present:** Kevin Banaszak (departed early), Ian Bartelmez (departed early), Mike Depies, Dave Elwing, George Ermert, Dennis Fleischer, Shawn Gibbons, Joe Gonyo, Russ Olson, Kim Shady, Pat Smith, and Bruce Urben

**Also virtually present:** Kelcy Boettcher, Jason Buck (WWA member), Bruce Ross, and Peter Ziegler

**Unable to Attend:** Jim Freck, B.J. Grassmann, and Todd Schaller

**Agenda:**

* **6:38 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**

The President asked Board members for agenda repair issues or new business. No items were brought forward.

* **6:39 PM – September Board of Directors (BoD) Minutes (Secretary Elwing)**

Dave Elwing motioned (Bruce Urben seconded) that September’s Board Minutes be accepted as published. The Board unanimously approved September’s Board meeting minutes.

* **6:40 PM – Monthly Financials (Executive Director Ross & Director of Administration Boettcher)**

Balance sheet’s unrestricted funds continue to drop due to the impact of battling the online sales issue with the Department of Gaming (DoG) as reflected in expenditure for attorney fees and lost sales/unrealized revenue. The Association’s Unrestricted funds are roughly $50,000 below forecasted in the 2023 budget. However, the balance sheet overall is positive, but mostly reflects that restricted funds (grants) are up through unforecasted PLE grants. Kim Shady asked what the projected end-of-year Unrestricted funds total is. Kelcy Boettcher projected continued monthly losses of $10,000 per month. George Ermert asked if the $100,000 reserve/rainy day funds have been tapped. Kelcy Boettcher and Bruce Ross confirmed those funds remain untouched.

Ian Bartelmez injected that based upon demonstrated poor event performances and Waukesha’s recent October event cancellation, the Board needs to re-examine our funding, how we do business and our value to our membership. Based upon inflation, dwindling buying power, and frozen discretionary spending trends, Ian Bartelmez insisted that WWA examine how the Association competes and will continue without always asking the same people for donations and support.

In an attempt to respond, Bruce Ross shared the Association’s actual vs budgeted numbers indicating that net event revenue is slightly over $5,000 ahead of budget ($155,000 vs $150,000 YTD) and acknowledged that the greatest shortfall is in Class A sales (roughly $50,000 of which $37,000 are based upon calendar sales and a statewide Class A which cannot yet be determined). Unfortunately, Ian Bartelmez became inflammatory and disruptive to the meeting at this point. President Urben warned Ian to curb his language, but Ian Bartelmez railed back suggesting that if Board Members did not care for his honesty, tone or language they could move for a vote to remove him from the Board. Dennis Fleischer moved to remove Ian Bartelmez from the Board. Prior to being seconded Ian Bartelmez verbally resigned and chose to remove himself from the meeting. He later submitted his resignation from the Board and the Association by email.

Bruce Ross redirected the Board’s attention to fiscal matters by addressing the need to initiate 2024 budgetary planning to ensure a draft budget could be presented during the 2024 Annual Meeting and that to do so, committees would need to provide initial budget requests NLT November’s Board meeting.

Following a brief discussion, the Board selected 20 January 2024 as the date for an in-person Annual Meeting with the option for members to also attend virtually via Zoom.

* **7:05 PM – Public Lands Update (PLE Mark Pfost)**

To date, WWA’s Public Lands Ecologists (PLEs) examined 70 of WDNR’s 1,455 parcels. Of the 70, the Paradise Valley (Waukesha County), Brooklyn (Green Lake and Dane County), and Peter Helland (Columbia County) Wildlife Areas are in the scoping phase, while Navarino Wildlife Area (Waupaca County) is entering the permit phase.

PLE Mark Pfost provided the Board with a project overview and YTD status of the 275 acre Peter Helland Project to create adjacent two parcels upon which WDNR will be able to regulate water levels and waterfowl habitat. The total cost of the project is estimated to be between $29,000 and $50,000. Mark Pfost stated that he anticipates submitting permit requests for the east parcel by Thanksgiving. Progress on the eastern 125 acre parcel is going well while the western 150 acres is delayed due to an inability to contact an adjacent landowner whose land will likely be impacted.

Bruce Urben asked, “Assuming permitting is approved, will WWA need another WDNR contract to perform the work?” Bruce Ross responded that WDNR will work with WWA to develop, then issue a non-competitive single site agreement (SSA) to WWA that will detail the scope of work and provide/authorize funding.

* **7:22 PM – Executive Director’s Report (Executive Director Ross)**

***DoG Update.*** Bruce Ross reviewed the projected resolution process hopefully culminating with a decision in WWA’s favor by the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). DoG and WWA previously agreed that a stipulation of facts was acceptable, with the expectation that a motion for summary judgment will be submitted by WWA, commented on by the state, and ruled upon by the Administrative Law Judge, thus preventing the need for an administrative hearing to orally argue facts and positions to the ALJ. The ALJ’s decision is expected NLT 20 November.

***Sweepstakes vs Raffles Option.*** Based upon several inquiries received following a recent DU 50-Gun Sweepstakes email, Bruce Ross examined differences between what Wisconsin allows for conducting “sweepstakes” versus “online Class A raffles.” In the interest of time, interested parties were referred to a summary of findings available on the Board’s protected web page.

* **7:26 PM – Hall of Fame (HoF) Discussion (Executive Director Ross)**

Bruce Ross thanked Jim Freck (not present) and others who offered suggestions relative to examining and revamping WWA’s HoF purpose and nomination criteria. Bruce Ross relayed Jim Freck’s recommendation that HoF discussions be paused for 2023 and be reconsidered in 2024. In Jim Freck’s absence, Bruce Ross asked for a motion for the Board to vote, accordingly. George Ermert motioned (Dave Elwing seconded) that the Board postpone 2023 HoF nominations and efforts to revamp the HoF process until 2024. The motion was unanimously carried.

* **7:29 PM – Tract 9 Leopold-Pines Conservation Area Wetlands Restoration (Pines) Project Update (Peter Ziegler)**

Peter Ziegler presented the Board with an overall plan to restore roughly 240 acres of wetlands on the Pines family property by removing a number of drainage features and installing a dam. The property is located on the north side of the Wisconsin River near Baraboo (immediately across from the Leopold Foundation and Aldo Leopold’s shack). These actions will force water back into inland lowlands that were previously drained. While public access and hunting will not be allowed, the project will significantly increase the number of waterfowl held by the area. If approved, the project will benefit from a $110,000 NAWCA grant and supported by matching funds (WWA: $8,525; WDNR: $65,000; Leopold Foundation: $2,924; and landowner$42,631).

* **7:39 PM – Better Business Bureau (BBB) Organizational Evaluation (Executive Director Ross)**

The BBB requires biennial organizational assessments of entities that BBB accredits. Specific formats are not designated. To address the requirement, Bruce Ross introduced an organizational evaluation he performed using the Baldridge Criteria assessment method. Baldridge Criteria evaluates an organization’s leadership, strategy, customers, metrics and analysis, workforce, operations, and results. President Urben thanked the Executive Director for his efforts and tasked Board Members to review the document for materials that needed clarification or information deemed important that might have been missed. Director feedback to Bruce Ross is due NLT October 30th. This evaluation should form the basis of a strategic plan developed and implemented by the Board. The evaluation is posted on the Board’s protected web page.

* **7:44 PM – EXPO 23 Update (Executive Director Ross)**

Bruce Ross stated that he had planned to present a formal EXPO event report out, but that it was not yet ready. He summarized that EXPO 23 netted roughly $20,000 which was added to existing EXPO funds bringing those funds to roughly $57,000. These funds are available to continue EXPO growth and professionalization, as well as scholarship and PLE funding.

Bruce Ross, Don Kirby, and Shawn Gibbons are working on a multi-year business plan that examines potential growth and expansion options beyond a one-day event. Their current recommendation is that expansion beyond being a one-day event does not occur before 2025.

The idea of WWA taking “full ownership” of the EXPO was raised during September’s Board Meeting. Bruce Ross cautioned the Board on acting prematurely before a firm strategy for partnership, manning, and planning is established. This can be developed over the course of the next several months. For example, Bruce Ross strongly advocated retention of partners like the Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress which ran the EXPO’s Youth Zone. Partner organizations provide volunteers before and on the day of execution. This “outside” help from other partners may not remain available in numbers needed if WWA assumes full ownership. Bruce Urben acknowledged the desire from other Directors for WWA to “own” the EXPO while emphasizing that each Director will need to assume larger roles throughout the year in EXPO planning and execution, far beyond that which is done by most Board members now. Executive Director Ross stated that greater visibility and understanding is needed before the Board can make an informed decision regarding shifting EXPO “ownership) beyond current formal leadership roles, majority of votes on the steering committee and financial management.

* **7:38 PM – Committee Reports (President Urben)**

**Education Committee (Bruce Urben):** The committee focused on R3 efforts, Waterfowlers Academy LTHs, continued work by Dr Orlofsky (UWSP), and extending the wood duck curriculum to more schools. Additionally, Bruce Urben informed the Board that the Committee is pursuing a NRCS grant to continue improvements at WWA’s Abrams Property.

**Habitat Committee (Bruce Ross):** PLE updates sufficed for Habitat Committee updates.

**Policy Committee (George Ermert):** In an effort to introduce sandhill crane (SHC) hunting in Wisconsin, the Committee will present a Sandhill Crane Biology and Management briefing to state legislators on October 25th. The intent is to educate legislators and allow them to ask questions regarding science based SHC management. 15 RSVPs have been received so far, but Georger Ermert is pleased by the responses as many came from individuals previously not engaged on the topic. He anticipates additional positive attendance RSVPs as the date gets closer and legislators work out daily schedules. Furthermore, George Ermert contacted each Sporting Heritage Committee member while in the Capital earlier this week.

**Development Committee (Dave Elwing):** The committee did not meet formally this month, but individual actions to strengthen/expand funding streams and expand WWA’s presence across the State were made. Bruce Ross previously addressed work to secure and execute grants, plus ongoing DoG activities. Russ Olson initiated Giving Tuesday requests to be included in Give Big Green Bay, the Packers, and the Green Bay Community Foundation. Thanks to Jason Buck (The Fowl Drake) plans to represent WWA at the Eau Clare Wisconsin Sport Show in March are being made. Lastly, thanks to the efforts of many, the Midland Wings Chapter banquet was a resounding success netting over $18,000. President Urben once again made a plea to each Director to become a WWA Sustaining Sponsor.

**Communications Committee: (George Ermert)** Due to George’s overwhelming work schedule the Committee did not meet this month. Shawn Gibbons & Connie Markham volunteered to assist with WWA’s social media effort.

* **8:03 PM – President’s Recap/Action Items (President Urben)**

President Urben’s recap of the Board’s agenda, action items, and decisions included:

1. The Board approved September’s Board Minutes.
2. The Board selected January 20th, 2024, as the date for the in-person (with a virtual attendance option) Annual Meeting.
3. President Urben tasked committees to provide 2024 budget requests to Bruce Ross NLT November 15th.
4. The Board received information briefs on the Helland and Pines projects.
5. President Urben tasked directors to review and provide comment on the BBB required organizational evaluation that Bruce Ross drafted. Feedback is due to Bruce Ross NLT October 30th.
* **8:06 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

**Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting at 6:30 PM on November 15th.**