

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Wednesday December 20, 2023

Board Members virtually present: Mike Depies, George Ermert, Jim Freck, Shawn Gibbons, B.J. Grassmann, Bruce Urben

Also virtually present: Bruce Ross, Kelcy Boettcher and Connie Markham (Swift-Waters).

Unable to Attend: Kevin Banaszak, Russ Olson, Todd Schaller, Kim Shady, Dave Elwing, Joe Gonyo, Dennis Fleischer, Pat Smith

Agenda:

- **6:35 PM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**
- **6:36 PM – November Board of Directors (BoD) Minutes (President Urben)**

B.J. motioned to approve. Jim seconded. The Board unanimously approved November’s Board meeting minutes.
- **6:38 PM – November Financials (Executive Director Ross & Director of Administration Boettcher)**

Kelcy Boettcher distributed and posted November’s financial spreadsheets, accompanied by an explanatory summary. Directors asked no questions and accepted the November financial statements as delivered.
- **6:38 PM – End of Year Financials (Executive Director Ross)**

The Lakeshore chapter held their event end of November, the event was not well attended and likely fell a bit short of budget. However, at the beginning of December the Christmas Bash netted over \$11k and the affiliated Frosty’s Five raffle also netted over \$11k. At the same time, we will be able to shift some funds from our restricted grant accounts to unrestricted, improving our year-end financials. We won our case against the Division of Gaming with the declaratory ruling by the judge that was strongly in our favor and the motion with a request for recovery of our attorney costs has been submitted. To date we have paid approximately \$29k in legal fees and have not been billed for any hours from November or December yet. The judge should make a determination by mid-January. The state has informed us that they are not going to challenge the judge’s decision by asking for a re-hearing or going to circuit court, and the time thresholds for both of those options has passed. We have revised our policies for online sales of all class A raffles and resumed sales immediately. **Our raffle policies are proprietary information and are not open for distribution outside of the organization.** If anyone outside the organization were to ask about our policies, please refer them to Bruce Ross. Online calendar sales began Dec. 1 and we have sold nearly all available inventory since then, with almost 700 sold online to date. Rob Monette and Bruce Ross have been continually collecting from our sellers any calendars that will not be sold face-to-face; the board opted to print 500 fewer calendars this year due to increased printing costs and that has impacted available inventory. We have hired a data entry clerk at a high hourly rate to handle the calendar raffle data entry needs at a rate that will likely exceed the \$3k budgeted.
- **7:10 PM – NRCS Service Contract Update (Executive Director Ross)**

We are now under contract with NRCS to provide monitoring services for WRP easement properties and CRP properties. Staff met with NRCS to talk through the contract, NRCS is still unsure how much work they have for us but we will sit down with them again in January to walk through the properties. We should not hire another ecologist until we know we will have enough work to keep them busy and that will not occur until at least spring.
- **7:15 PM – 2024 Budget (Executive Director Ross)**

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We had hoped we would have budget draft #1 available, however due to all of the uncertainties mentioned above staff have fallen behind this timeline. We hope within the next few days to be able to provide draft #1 to the board. Review and voting of the budget may occur via email electronically. The organization needs to develop a longer-term strategic plan; in late March or early April we'll start going through some plan considerations. If there are any directors that would like to be involved reach out to Bruce Ross.

- **7:20 PM - Habitat Update: Brooklyn Wildlife Area and grants (Executive Director Ross)**

PLE Biologist Anna Rzchowski put together a presentation on one of her current projects, Brooklyn Wildlife Area in Dane County. Bruce shared the presentation, which is also posted on the board secure page. The presentation outlines all that goes in to getting a project going and into construction. The ecologists meet weekly on Monday's at 3pm to discuss all that is happening in our habitat program and any directors that wish to participate are welcome.

- **7:25 PM - Hall of Fame Update (Jim Freck)**

President Urben reminded the board decided previously to suspend the Hall of Fame for one year so there will be no 2023 class. Jim Freck has stepped in to review and potentially revise the process of nomination policies, his suggested changes have been posted on the board secure page, please look this over and provide input to Jim.

- **7:30 PM - Director Vacancies (President Urben)**

We have one open seat on the board and five seats that are up for election. Bruce Ross cautioned that we should carefully vet any new candidates.

- **7:32 PM - WWF Delegates (President Urben)**

As a member of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, our statewide membership provides WWA with three delegates. Shawn Gibbons volunteered and Bruce Ross and Bruce Urben will fill the other two spots.

- **7:35 PM – Committee Reports (President Urben)**

President Urben called for any Committee updates for which notes/minutes had not already been distributed.

Education Committee (Bruce Urben): An education meeting was held last week and minutes will be available soon. The committee has put together their action plan and a proposed budget request.

Habitat Committee (B.J. Grassmann): we have filled the Adopt a Wildlife Area Coordinator position with a current committee member, Ryan Disterhaft. The action plan goals are essentially complete.

Policy Committee (George Ermert): Sandhill crane hunt is at the forefront of the committee's plans.

Development Committee (Bruce Ross): WE continue to look for grant opportunities across all of our missions. We've submitted approx. \$18k in grant requests to Sitka and Onyx and a \$100k NAWCA grant for the Pines project. With Dave Elwing taking on a higher level of responsibility on the Midland Wings committee he would welcome a new Development Committee Chair to replace him.

Communications (Shawn Gibbons and Connie Markham): Since taking over management last month they have kept up with at least one post a week, focusing on education on our missions and some fundraising promotions such as the calendar and events.

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- **7:45 PM –President’s Recap/Action Items (President Urben)**

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

- 1) WWA has won our case with the Division of Gaming
 - a. Information regarding this judgement is proprietary and should not be shared
- 2) We are waiting on hiring our 3rd ecologists until spring 2024
- 3) Look for a draft budget via email within the next week or so
- 4) Hall of Fame process - suggested revisions are posted online, provide comments to Jim Freck
- 5) We have one open seat and five seats that are up for re-election. Please forward any nominees to Bruce Ross or Bruce Urben

- **7:48 PM – 2025 Calendar (Mike Depies)**

We’re starting to plan for 2025 calendar and to discuss the funds raised from the 2023 calendar decoy auction. The committee will meet in January to discuss options for other revenue generators for the 2025 calendar similar to the decoy auction. Please let Mike know if you wish to participate.

- **7:50 PM – Committee Structure (George Ermert)**

George suggested we discuss and revisit the structure of our committees.

7:50 PM – Meeting Adjourned

Next BoD meeting will be our annual in-person meeting on January 20th at our annual meeting.