

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – Saturday, January 18, 2025

Board Members present: Mike Depies, George Ermert, Shawn Gibbons, Joe Gonyo, BJ Grassmann, Connie Markham, Todd Schaller and Bruce Urben

Also virtually present: Kelcy Boettcher, Bruce Ross

Unable to Attend: Dave Elwing, Pat Smith, Kim Shady

Agenda:

- **11:40 AM – Meeting Convened by President Urben**

- **11:43 AM – Officer Elections (President Urben)**

Bruce Urben nominated Kim Shady as Treasurer of the organization. Kim has spoken with former treasurer, Russ Olson, as well as Bruce Urben and Kelcy Boettcher and has agreed to take on the position. B.J. seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- **11:45 AM – Approve December Board Meeting Minutes (President Urben)**

Todd Schaller motioned to approve, B.J. seconded. Minutes unanimously approved.

- **11:47 AM – 2025 Board Meeting Schedule**

2025 meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of each month from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Executive Committee meetings will be held starting in February, at 1:00 PM on the third Monday of every other month.

- **11:50 AM – 2024 Financials & Calendar Sales (Director of Administration [DA] Kelcy Boettcher, Executive Director [ED] Ross)**

DA Boettcher emailed and posted the financial report to Board members prior to the meeting. Bruce Ross presented a budget memo to create the foundation for looking at 2025 and went over 2024 financials. Overall, the organization should end close to \$60k in the black. Some of this is due to conservative budgeting and some is due to well performing stand-alone class A's and the calendar coming in significantly above budget.

Chapter events came in under budget, due to the loss of some chapters/events and the remaining fragility of our chapters. Class A raffles made up for this deficit. Bruce presented a chart showing that over the past ten years chapter nets have maintained fairly stable, but much of this is due to the increase in online raffle sales that bolster event nets. Since 2019 chapter event revenue as a percentage of gross revenue has decreased almost 20%, showing that the organization is finding other sources of income beyond relying on chapter events.

The expansion of our program support fees (NRCS, DNR, USFWS) has offset some overhead expenses beyond the direct program expenses.

Since 2014, **WWA equity** has increased almost \$500k.

There are two ratios that are important indicators of how WWA spends their money. Since 2017, **program expenses** as a percentage of total expenses have increased almost 50%. 84% of every dollar spent by the organization is spent on our missions as of YE 2024. Over this same time period, **fundraising expenses** have decreased from 41% to 18%, showing that the organization is efficient at raising funds.

Overall, our **assets** are growing and our liabilities are going down.

Our **Balance Sheet** grew stronger with our total assets up almost \$100k, and our unrestricted funds are up 51%. State restricted remains at \$100k, with an additional \$9700 gained in interest this year. The endowment fund grew 13% and discussion was held on the viability of remaining with the GGBCF vs another fund manager.

- **12:42 PM – Committee Plans/Budgetary Needs for 2025**

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Education Committee. Todd Schaller explained that in order to continue to grow the R3 effort, WWA funds may be necessary as our extension for the R3 grant ends September 30th, and some program expenses will come in after that date.

Advocacy Committee. \$8k is built into WWA's 2025 budget for our share of the \$60k coalition budget of bringing in a sandhill crane lobbyist. George Ermert explained that to on-board contract help, there will be a \$5k/month retainer to bring on a team; George has a 2-person firm in mind that would help not only with SHC, but also with Knowles Nelson. This firm would set strategy and set up meetings; they also have the political clout to advance the effort. George suggested this could be a fundraising opportunity to offset the expense.

Habitat. B.J. Grassmann reported that there are no new initiatives that require budgetary expenses beyond what has already been budgeted.

Membership. George suggested marketing support to do a spring membership drive.

● **1:00 PM – 2025 Budget**

Discussion was already held on chapter/event/raffle income. Other line items of note:

- \$90k for our **NRCS monitoring agreement**, this would help support the hiring of a new staff ecologist as well as supporting our existing ecologists and other staff overhead.
- We have budgeted for a full-year (\$57k) of a **DNR funded PLE ecologist**. While we have agreed with the DNR to extend the contract for the full calendar year of 2025, DNR only has funding assured for the first half of the year.
- We anticipate spending, and being reimbursed for, \$230,000 of our **USFWS Little Yellow River grant**.
- We budgeted to spend and be reimbursed \$15k of our balance of the **R3 grant**, which has been extended through September 30th.
- A **staff compensation increase** of \$16,800 has been included, following the track of the prior board-approved staff compensation plan.
- If WWA spends more than \$1M/year from federal sources in total, an **audit** will be required. Bruce does not believe we'll quite reach that point for FY25, but we have included \$5k of consulting from our outside accounting firm to help prepare WWA for an audit.
- The **website** is still in progress, and the balance owed is due at the time of completion and included in the budget.
- **Outsourcing EXPO and marketing functions** to Swift Waters – a memo was sent to the board detailing the expense and the various sources of funding for this one-year contract. We have included \$400/month to cover this expense in the budget. Discussion was had on the WWA piece of the contract, as far as if this would/could include additional assistance from Swift Water with WWA's monthly newsletters and raffle promotions. It was proposed to that Swift Waters determine what that would entail and could create a potential addendum to this contract to address that need. Shawn Gibbons and Connie Markham recused themselves at this point. B.J. motioned that we approve the contract as written with a stipulation that we get further specificity on WWA marketing functions that Swift Waters will clarify for the board by the date of the March meeting. Joe Gonyo seconded. Motion passed.
- **Year-end decisions** include:
 - Balancing out an anticipated shortfall in 2025 (\$20k)

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- Place funds in our reserve funds to accumulate interest and be available in case of a “rainy day”
- Reserve funding for initiatives anticipate in 2025, including new staff (\$12k+\$20k)
- Staff bonuses (\$15k) to be distributed at the discretion of the Executive Director.
- Staff will put together budget draft #2 and provide that to the board prior to the February 19th board meeting.
- **2:40 PM – Board Vacancies (President Urban)**

With the approval of Swift Waters contract, Shawn Gibbons will step back from the board as a member, but will continue to attend meetings. That provides five open board seats, with one interested party for one seat, leaving four potentially open. Bruce asked that board members consider anyone they know that may be a qualified applicant for the board.
- **2:45 PM – Meeting Adjourned**

Next BoD meeting will be a virtual meeting at 6:30 PM on February 19th.