

TPE Board Meeting Minutes February 2, 2022

The meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order at 7:04 pm by Board President Scott Fulton. Board Members present: Caroljean Coventree, Gary Eldred, Scott Fulton, Harvey Halvorsen, David Hamel, Evanne Hunt, Rich Henderson, Alice Mirk, Deanna Pomije, Jon Rigden, Jim Rogala, Jay Rutherford and Stephen Winter. Absent: Jerry Newman. Staff present: Debra Behrens, Caleb DeWitt, Khris Miller and Jerry Pedretti.

The meeting notice and agenda, along with a link to the Board package containing the materials for this meeting were emailed to the Board members on January 27th.

Motion by S Winter, second by H Halvorsen, all voting in favor, to adopt the agenda.

Motion by C Coventree, second by R Henderson, all voting in favor, to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda includes the December 15th Board Minutes; the November 15th and January 28th Land Protection Committee minutes; the January 3rd Education Committee minutes; the November 16th PE Trust minutes; the January 10th and January 24th Conference Committee minutes; and the January 27th Finance Committee Minutes, as revised. *(Two corrections were made to the 01/28 Land Protection minutes)*

D. Behrens presented an overview of the Treasurer's report containing the financial data through December 31st as brought forward by the Finance Committee. Year-end giving ran higher than anticipated and the variable rate allocation is expected to reduce to 55% in the year end "true-up". Organizational wide income of \$1,146,229. Revenues tracked higher in 2021, while expenses maintained on budget. Total assets are now over \$12 million, with total liabilities at \$78,469. The Board was also provided revised 2022 Budget worksheet with the actual Y-E numbers for 2021. Note that these reports are not final. As staff continue to close out 2021 there may be some minor changes to the numbers.

Motion J Rutherford, second by J Rogala, all voting in favor, to accept the Treasurer's Report.

President's Report: S Fulton reported the site monitoring of all TPE fee title properties and conservation easements is complete for 2021.

The Land Protection Committee is currently working to resolve the issues at Parish Savanna and Sugar River Savanna.

The Land Management Committee continues to work on the *TPE Burn Policy*. Next steps will include an extensive review and input process by the Board, Burn Coordinators, and anyone involved with burns, that wants to participate. Possibly a zoom meeting in late May or early June can be scheduled to answer questions and receive feedback. The intention is to have the policy on the Board agenda in July or September. Once finally approved, the roll-out of the policy is critical. Landowners and volunteers need to fully understand the policy and the reason(s) TPE has created this policy.

Executive Director Report: D Behrens has prepared a written report, which is in the Board materials, and asked if anyone had questions.

We welcome Khris Miller as the new part-time administrative assistant.

Every 90 days the plans and priorities for the quarter are decided. There is always much more that we would like to do, but the workload is such that priorities need to be set, and the staff then focuses time accordingly. D Behrens reviewed the current quarters goals and priorities with the Board.

Platteville will again register a group of students for the annual conference. If any Board members have connections with other colleges in our service area, we would like to hear about it. TPE would love to have more students attending.

There will be a series of meet-up sessions on the conference platform. This is an opportunity for a Chapter to host a session to meet new members, and provide a personal connection.

New Business:

Investment Policy: The Finance Committee has worked on revising this policy for months. There are more questions/concerns the Committee will continue to address, and a new revised policy may be coming in the months ahead, but the Committee felt it was important to adopt this revised policy now, as is, because it reflects how TPE is currently handling investments at this time.

For clarity, the heading in section IV. C. will be changed to say: Responsibilities of Chapter Support Staff, rather than Responsibilities of Management.

Motion by E Hunt, second by C Coventree, all voting in favor, to adopt the Investment Policy as presented.

Greater Prairie Chicken management plan: The DNR is accepting comment regarding various proposals contained in a *Greater Prairie Chicken Management Plan*. The Land Protection Committee has asked for Board approval to submit a comment in favor of one alternative that would begin a program working towards the translocation into the SW Wisconsin Grassland Area.

G Eldred spoke against the proposal. He does not believe there is enough habitat for this to be successful. R Henderson stated the translocation would only happen when there is sufficient habitat. D Pomije stated that based on the DNR survey there needs to be a minimum of 130,000 acres available.

The proposal is to support the ongoing work by the DNR and that comments are due by Feb. 18th.

Motion by C Coventree, second by G Eldred, to approve the Land Protection Committee's request to submit a comment on behalf of TPE, in favor of the proposal. The majority voting in favor, motion carried. (G Eldred and D Pomije voting nay, C Coventree sustained)

Distribution from the Legal Defense fund: TPE incurred legal fees as it worked to resolve some encroachment issues at the Moely Prairie. The Land Protection Committee recommends the Board approve a distribution from the *Legal Defense Fund* of \$1,176.30 to cover these expenses.

Motion by E Hunt, second by G Eldred, all voting in favor, to approve a distribution of \$1,176.30 to cover the legal expenses incurred at Moely Prairie.

Goplin addition to Erbe Grasslands: The Goplin acquisition received preliminary approval by the Board on December 16, 2020. This project is ready to close. The DNR and Dane County have both committed the grant funds and the balance of money is in hand. The Land Protection Committee recommends the Board grant final approval.

Motion by J Rogala, second by E Hunt, all voting in favor, to grant final approval of the Goplin acquisition and authorize the Executive Director to execute the proper documents to close this transaction.

Hanley Farm Trust addition to Moundview: The Hanley acquisition received preliminary approval by the Board on March 5, 2017. The option to purchase needs to be exercised by June 15, 2022. This project is soon ready to close. The DNR and USFWS grant funds are committed, and due to the successful capital campaign, the balance of money is in hand. The Land Protection Committee recommends the Board grant final approval.

Motion by E Hunt, second by G Eldred, all voting in favor, to grant final approval of the Hanley Farm Trust acquisition and authorize the Executive Director to execute the proper documents to close this transaction.

2022 Conference: S Winter updated the Board on the Conference preparations. Nearly every presenter is locked in and F Ragan is in the process of securing the pre-recorded sessions. It is coming together. The staff and E Hunt have been working very hard to have everything ready to go. D Hamel asked about the shared workload between Chapter Support and the host chapter. S Winter didn't have a breakdown, but stated the Chapter Support staff are amazing. Further discussion about the workload and how it is split between staff and volunteers. S Fulton thanked S Winter for his leadership in this year's preparations and

reminded everyone that since this is a virtual conference there really is not a host chapter and the staff have more of a role to play in the conference preparation and execution.

Core Values: D. Behrens presented a revised look at the *Core Values* and the emerging themes that have surfaced over the last few months. The Board discussed the presentation and a few questions came up. D Behrens reminded the Board that TPE will review these values annually to be sure they always reflect who we are. There are other values besides core values, other aspirational values that haven't risen to be a core value yet. S Fulton feels this would be a good topic to discuss when the Board has its planning session.

Motion by C Coventree, second by S Winter, all voting in favor, to adopt: Rooted in reverence for the land; Long view; Working together; and Sharing knowledge, as the core values of The Prairie Enthusiasts.

Conservation Property for sale: D Hamel described the need to help connect conservation minded buyers to properties with conservation value. He would like TPE to have a page on its web-site to list properties having conservation value that are currently for sale.

The Board agrees in concept, but there are questions about how this would be done and if it will be something that volunteers could manage, or if it will need to be added to staff responsibilities. Some Board members do not feel it could be managed properly by volunteers, and are worried that the staff doesn't have the capacity. C Coventree would like to see this delayed until after the Board completes its strategic planning.

Motion by D Hamel, second by E Hunt, to refer this project to the Land Protection Committee for further review, and to bring a recommendation back to the Board, the majority voting in favor, motion carried. (C Coventree and H Halvorsen voted nay)

Discussion on the expansion of the Minnesota Driftless Chapter and The Prairie Enthusiasts of the Year will be deferred to the next meeting.

The 2022 TPE Board meeting schedule is as follows:

- Tuesday, March 8, via Teams, 7:00pm.
- Strategic Planning (place TBD): Friday June 10, 4:30pm to Saturday, June 11, 3:30pm.
- Annual Meeting and Picnic (host, place, and time TBD): Sunday July 17th
- Annual Planning: Saturday, September 10, 9:00am, Viroqua office.
- Annual Planning: Saturday October 8, 11:00am, Viroqua office.
- Wednesday, November 30, via Teams, 7:00pm.
- Wednesday, December 28, via Teams, 7:00pm.

Motion by H Halvorsen, second by E Hunt, all voting in favor, to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted by J. Pedretti