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Board of Directors Meeting Minutes June 11, 2024; 7-9PM

Members Present: Jim Rogala, Kay Wienke, Evanne Hunt, Jessica Bizub, Jay Rutherford, Katie Hahn, Steve Winter, Scott Fulton, Alice Mirk, Jerry Newman, Rich Henderson, Gary Eldred, Jon Rigden, Deanna Pomjie and Matt Dettlaff

Members Absent: Harvey Halverson

Staff Present: Debra Behrens, Kelly Billig, Becky Bradish, Sarah Barron, Duncan Schultz,

Guest Present: Rob Schuettpelez

Agenda

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Jim Rogala called the meeting to order at 7:05pm

2. Adopt Meeting Agenda

Scott Fulton makes a motion to adopt the agenda. Jerry Newman seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

3. Approve Consent Agenda

Alice Mirk makes a motion to adopt the consent agenda. Steve Winter seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

4. Treasurer's Report - Jerry Newman

A. ACTION: FY2023-24 Financial Reports

Treasurer, Jerry Newman, asks Rob Schuettpelez to present financial report for the final quarter of FY2023-24.

Highlights include:

- Organization wide unrestricted contributions continued outpacing the previous year in the 5th Qtr. (Increase of \$29k and 40% over prior year period),
- Chapter Support expenses stayed the same as the prior year's period while revenues increased \$18k or 13%. Chapter expenses increased by 38% but this was more than offset by the increase of Chapter revenues by 80%.

- Chapter Support is showing an operating net loss of \$56k for the 5th Qtr. while the Chapters are showing a net loss of \$15k. It is typical to show losses for the Jan-March qtr. The CY net operating loss is about \$37k less than the prior year.
- Organization wide unrestricted cash balance was \$634k at 3/31/2024 which is an increase of \$31k from 12/31/2023 and \$71k higher than this time last year. The unrestricted cash increased even though there was an operating loss because there was over \$100k of grants receivable that were collected.
- Even though operating cash increased slightly, the number of months operating cash on hand decreased to just over 6 months of operating expenses due to overall higher expenses budgeted for 24/25 fiscal year. There is \$74k of grants receivable outstanding at 3/31/24. Once these amounts are received, this will improve the unrestricted cash balances.
- Restricted cash balances stayed consistent at \$1.1 million at 3/31/2024.

Jon Rigden makes a motion to accept the FY2023-24 financial reports. Scott Fulton seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

5. President's Report - Jim Rogala

DEI opportunity to participate in a round table of the LTA. The Executive Committee will be discussing this.

Creation of a new Board Ad-Hoc Committee re: policies, etc. First agenda is a new board member on-boarding process. Kay is on-board to chair the committee and we're looking for additional members. Additional topics for the Ad-Hoc Committee will be virtual elections and leadership recruitment.

The Executive Committee has been exploring a new governance model which could help us move forward if the Executive Committee so chooses.

6. Executive Director's Report - Debra Behrens

Couple of updates:

- Have accepted offer from a candidate for the mission advancement position. Cassidy Colton will be joining our team as the new Advancement Assistant.
- Still looking for someone for the Operations role but we have some strong candidates.
- Spent time with Gathering Waters, DLC and Groundswell staff members during a tour with State Rep. Jenna Jacobson. We visited Handrick Grasslands and Pat Handrick was our tour guide. It was a very informative and moving experience.

We'll be launching the planning group for our first pilot program for AmeriCorps (3 fulltime members starting March 2025) We'll be posting positions in September 2024. Really would like someone from every Chapter participating in the planning group. Kelly will be following up after the Board meeting. This group will start meeting in July.

Jerry had a question about a recent RES donation. The \$10K gift from RES is going to the operating budget.

7. New Business

Executive Committee

A. ACTION: Election of Officers

Scott Fulton will be rotating off the Board. We thank Scott for his many, many years on the Executive Committee, and he will be sorely missed.

All current officers have agreed to one more term. Starting date is June 2024.

Officers nominated:

- President – Jim Rogala
- Vice President – Alice Mirk
- Treasurer – Jerry Newman
- Secretary – Harvey Halverson

All in favor of accepting these four individuals as our officers, please say yes. All opposed, please say nay. Unanimous yes vote passes. The new slate of offices for the Board of Directors has been approved.

Finance Committee

B. ACTION: 2023 Tax Form 990

Rob presents the 2023 Tax Form 990 and answers questions.

Jerry Newman makes a motion to accept the 2023 Tax Form 990. Alice Mirk seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

C. DISCUSSION and ACTION: Revised Accounting Policy

Becky Bradish presents the proposed changes to the Accounting Policy. The layout of the document is the primary change. There are very few substantive policy changes. The old policy was inaccurate and put our accreditation risk.

Overall changes:

- removed all procedural steps - will now just be policies to make updates to procedures easier.
- Remove contractor accountability.
- More evergreen policy language (i.e. remove mention of specific software)
- Refer out to existing policies rather than duplicate policies in the document
- Updated general organizational expenses with language around credit card approvals and accountability.
- Changed the language around financial reports to say that the accountant will ensure that the finances are completed and reconciled and that we would be making it available by the end of the subsequent month.

- Change in restricted donation language to we will treat restricted donations to honor the donor's intent to track them in a way that ensures that we can be honoring that and in compliance with all relevant regulations.
- Removed redundant language under the restricted endowment section.

Jessica Bizub makes a motion to approve the revised accounting policy. Deanna Pomjie seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

Land Protection Committee

- D. ACTION ITEM: LPC gave preliminary approval to explore two land swaps
- a. Horseshoe Mound (Northwest Illinois Chapter & Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation)

Jay Rutherford presented the proposed land swap with NIPE and Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation at the Horseshoe Mound property. The Land Protection Committee has authorized the staff to do more diligence before any legal process occurs. NIPE will evaluate the proposed land swap area. Jay feels it's a like-to-like property trade.

Discussion occurred. Some Board members felt our concern should be with TPE's conservation easement. Other Board members recommended that the LTA needs to be consulted.

Rich Henderson makes a motion to go forward with *exploring the option to swap a parcel of land with the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation at the Horseshoe Mound property.* Kay Wienke seconds the motion. 14 votes in Favor. One vote opposed. Motion carries.

- b. Briggs Wetland (Prairie Bluff Chapter & Landowner exchange)

Jerry Newman presented the proposed land swap between TPE and a landowner. The landowner is looking for a larger buffer between land owned by Green Rock Audubon Society (GRAS) and his land. There's been a good working relationship with GRAS, the landowner and TPE (PB Chapter). We do need to create some better maps. TPE hold an easement on the Parcel B but we haven't been able to do any land management on it. Would be good to get this surveyed and clarified with all the parties where the property lines are. There is concern about protecting the habitat of endangered species as well.

Jerry Newman makes a motion to go forward with *exploring the option to swap a parcel of land with the landowner.* Scott Fulton seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

- E. ACTION ITEM: New Projects
- a. Swenson Farm (Empire-Sauk Chapter)

Rich Henderson provides an overview of the Swenson farm located near the soon to be TPE's Agaski property. There's a remnant piece of prairie on the property. It also has a cold-water stream and trout stream. The landowner understands there will need to be a

major land management endowment. Would like to negotiate for the whole farmland. Might have options for seeing houses/buildings. DALC likely to be brought in as a partner. Right now we want approval to seriously meet with the landowner and come back with a sound proposal on possible funding sources, which may include KNSF.

- b. Big Hill Savanna (Empire-Sauk Chapter)
- c. Savanna Oaks (Empire-Sauk Chapter)
- d. Prairie Spirit Farm (Empire-Sauk Chapter)

Rich provides an overview of the Big Hill Savanna, Savanna Oaks and Prairie Sprirt Farm projects.

Gary Eldred makes a motion to approve a resolution to pursue KNSF and other federal/state funding sources for the Swenson Farm property and approve the preliminary land protection proposals for Swenson Farm, Big Hill Savanna, Savanna Oaks and Prairie Spirit Farm. Jay Rutherford seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

F. ACTION ITEM: Glacial Prairie Chapter request to sell a tract of the Adelman Schwartz Preserve

Jessica Bizub is representing the Glacial Prairie Chapter which is seeking permission to sell the small parcel at the Adelman Schwartz Preserve and use proceeds to add to the endowment.

Rich Henderson makes a motion for preliminary approval to move forward with sale of the Adelman Schwartz Preserve parcel. Kay Wienke seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

Land Management Committee

G. ACTION ITEM: Updating the Land Management Policy per LTA guidelines

Becky presents updates to the policy. This would cover any type of management plan. Not required by LTA to have an easement management plan.

Kay Wienke makes a motion to approve the policy after the change is made to strike the word "all" from the sentence "The Land Management committee is composed of representative from all the chapters." Rich Henderson seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

H. ACTION ITEM: Management plan for Woodlawn Management Agreement (MN Driftless Chapter)

This is high quality site near Winona and MN Driftless already has interest and volunteers to restore the site with cooperation of the cemetery association.

Rich Henderson makes a motion to approve the management plan for Woodlawn Management Agreement. Alice Mirk seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

I. ACTION ITEM: Management plan for Uren Trust addition to Erbe Grassland (Empire-Sauk Chapter)

The plan is written to meet KNSF requirements.

Gary Eldred makes a motion to approve the management plan for Uren Trust addition to Erbe Grassland. Kay Wienke seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion Carries.

Education Committee

J. Committee Update

Jessica Bizub presents the Education Committee update. There will be new an education feature - Summer gatherings. North event will be a smaller gathering. South event will be hosted by E-SC July 27-28.

Developing some educational/introductory materials for each Chapters based on some that the Coulee Chapter has been using.

Adjournment

Jay Rutherford makes a motion to adjourn. Steve Winter seconds the motion. All in favor. Jim Rogala adjourns the meeting at 9:01pm.

Future Meetings Schedule

- September 17, 2024; 7-9PM
- November 12, 2024; 7-9PM
- January 17-18, 2025 MEETING & RETREAT
- March 18, 2025; 7-9PM