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Board of Directors Meeting March 12, 2024; 7-9PM Minutes

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

Members Absent: Harvey Halvorsen, Rich Henderson, and Jon Rigden

Staff Present: Sarah Barron, Debra Behrens, Kelly Billig, Becky Bradish, Nate Lee, Khris Miller, Duncan Schultz

Agenda

A. Call to Order/Roll Call

Board President, Jim Rogala, called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

B. Adopt Meeting Agenda

Jerry Newman makes a motion to adopt meeting agenda. Steve Winter seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

C. Approve Consent Agenda

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

D. Treasurer's Report - Jerry Newman

Jerry asks Debra to present the Treasurer's report.

Overall revenues were strong year-to-date through the end of the year exceeding our 2023 goal for unrestricted contributions. The release from restrictions revenue was down, but we have been working to resolve that during Q5 and have identified about \$11,000 in additional revenue that's not reflected in this report.

Chapter Support expenses were higher than budgeted because our search for an operations leader took many months longer than anticipated and we used outside contractors to meet the needs of the organization during that time. The organization has an operating loss of \$105,000 but we've whittled that down to a \$94,000 gap as we work on releasing dollars from restrictions for 2023.

We ended the year with about seven months of operating cash on hand, which is a healthy position for the organization. That will continue to improve.

There's \$167,000 in grant receivables that were still outstanding at the end of the year. We received \$14,500 in February, but we're still working on collecting the remaining \$167,000. Those dollars will then be applied to last calendar year's expenses and improve our cash position for the organization.

Regarding the summary financial statement--restricted cash balances increased to \$1.2 million from \$400,000 dollars. Land protection has \$746,000 and \$160,000 is for land management. Those are not our endowment fund balances. That is cash that's available for us to use to further our mission. It is being held to support specific projects.

Restricted cash balances plus the Giordano and Murkowski Bluff acquisitions increased our total net assets for the calendar year 2023 to \$14.8 million for the organization.

There were no questions about the financial statements.

Jay Rutherford makes a motion to accept the Treasurer's report. Jessica Bizub seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

E. President's Report - Jim Rogala

Jim thanks everyone for their work at the January retreat.

We're in the middle of burn season. If you or your chapter have questions about burning questions feel free to contact Jim or Nate Lee in Chapter Support.

Jim also welcomes Matt Dettlaff to the Board of Directors. Matt represents the Prairie Sands Chapter. David Hamel is still involved in the Prairie Sands Chapter but is rotating off the Board of Directors. Matt looks forward to working with the other members of the Board.

F. Executive Director's Report - Debra Behrens

There were no questions for Debra about her Executive Director's report.

G. New Business

Finance Committee

1. FY2024-25 Budget

Debra presented the first budget for the new fiscal cycle starting on April 1st. This budget reflects the potential for aggressive growth that was agreed on at the planning retreat. If we slow down now, it will likely take longer to reach that growth. The budget also assumes within the next year we'll expand to include one or more chapters in the Twin Cities' area. There will certainly more discussion about what the process of expansion is going to look like.

This budget also assumes that Chapter Support would be resourced to support the achievement of the Board's three-year picture and to deliver on our one-year plan. Requests in the budget include Chapter Support resources needed to be successful delivering on the revenue, program and support expectations you have for our team.

Also, this budget assumes continuing an 80% variable allocation rate from Chapters to Chapter Support.

The 2023 calendar year preliminary results versus the 2024-25 fiscal year budget demonstrates a growth rate of 26% in income and 18% in expenses resulting in a \$1.5 million budget for the organization.

After review by both the Executive and Financial Committees we're presenting you with a deficit budget of \$34,000 for the organization. We want to have visibility to what the true risk is in the budget rather than saying we're going to balance the budget through additional revenue or cutting expenses. The expenses reflect what's needed to achieve the revenue goals for the organization.

We did do some cuts from the first round of the budget to this final draft. We started with a gap of \$100,000, but once we got down to \$34,000, it felt like a reasonable deficit budget to put forward to give the organization visibility to what the plan was.

Chapter Support has three key functions: mission programs, mission advancement (marketing, communications, fundraising work with volunteers, outreach and events planning) and operations. Much of the operations work is programmatic-- supporting land protection, administration, and doing administration work related to our Land Management programs.

In Chapter Support the increased expenditure is being used for building capacity in our mission advancement and operations functions. The addition of one new full-time equivalent position of an operations assistant who would be supporting and reporting to Becky on the operations team.

We've also included some expenses related to increasing capacity to pursue more grant opportunities for the organization and support our mid-level, major and planned giving programs.

AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA are an affordable way to build capacity in the mission advancement area.

The proposed pilot program of AmeriCorps will be a 3-person boots-on-the-ground support crew available to all chapters from Sept. 2024 -Aug. 2025. They're coming to us through WisCorps, but they can cross state lines. We will be working with each of our chapters to understand how you can best utilize this resource to support your work on the land in the coming year.

The AmeriCorps VISTA position will be a capacity building roll. That person will work on marketing, communication, and education programs.

Debra responds to questions from members.

Kay Wienke makes a motion to approve the FY2024-25 budget as presented. Scott Fulton seconds the motion and commends the mastery level that the staff has achieved with this budget. All in favor. Motion carries.

Land Protection Committee (LPC)

2. Final Project Plan for Newark Road Prairie

Jerry commends the work that Khris Miller has done on this project. The long-term hope is to build an endowment for the site.

Jerry Newman makes a motion to approve the final project plan for Newark Road Prairie. Steve Winter seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

3. 2023 Legal Defense Fund (LDF) and Monitoring Fund (MF) contributions

The LPC recommends contributing \$1,600 to LDF and \$3,500 to MF each for the Giordano and Marowski projects.

Khris comments that the LPC will be coming back to the Board with recommendations for Newark Road Prairie LDF and MF contributions after the project closes before the end of March.

Scott Fulton makes a motion to accept the recommendation to contribute a total of \$3,200 to LDF and \$7,000 to MF for the Giordano and Marowski projects. Jessica Bizub seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

Land Management Committee

4. Updated Ellis Shining Oaks management plan

Scott is wondering if the management plans still need to go through the Board. Jim state there was a discussion at the last meeting and people still want them to go through the Board for approval.

Steve Winter makes a motion to approve the updated Ellis Shining Oaks management plan. Kay Wienke seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

5. Giordano Oak Barrens and Sand Prairie management plan

Alice Mirk makes a motion to approve the Giordano Oak Barrens and Sand Prairie management plan. Steve Winter seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

Education Committee

6. Formation of sub-committee for summer events

Jessica gives an update of the Education Committee's intent to help organize summer events. The summer events sub-committee had first meeting March 5th. Two chapters are hosting events in 2024. The hope is to have a couple chapters host each year to keep them more accessible.

Goal is to have social time and share prairie knowledge. Events may include lectures, field trips and opportunities to share different management techniques. E-SC and St. Croix Valley will be the first two chapters hosting. Hoping that more chapters will be stepping forward to host or co-host in the future. Coulee is considering hosting in 2025 and may do a co-host with the MN Driftless or SW Chapters.

General Board

7. 2024-25 V/TO through 1-year plan

3-year picture goals agreed upon at Board retreat:

- Revenue: \$3 million
- Members: 3,700
- Volunteers: 25% increase
- Outreach Events: 110

We discussed the number of members at the Board retreat. The goal listed is a stretch number. We're thinking about members in a different way. We no longer include conference attendees as members unless they've given an additional gift beyond the conference fees. This goal also reflects the formation of a new chapter in the Twin Cities and outreach to Chicago area (not necessarily a new chapter) to acquire some new donors there. Plus, individual chapter growth. If we're serious about achieving the target of 10,000 members in 10 years so this is what it would take to get to that goal.

1-Year Plan

- Operating Revenue: \$1.5 million
- Members: 2,000
- Volunteers: 10% growth
- Outreach Events: 90

Goals for the Year

1. Document systems for organizational governance, management and oversight
2. Recruit and help local leaders to develop a Twin Cities chapter
3. Seek out opportunities for sharing knowledge with Indigenous communities
4. Execute plan for staff retention and hiring, and pilot AmeriCorps and VISTA program
5. Set-up and train users on new volunteer tracking system, including input of current data
6. Develop new and improved marketing efforts to grow our audience of potential members, with a focus on urban areas
7. Launch strategy for marketing, cultivating and stewarding planned gifts beginning in Q1

The 1-year plan was developed by Chapter Support and feedback from the Executive Committee. This is what we need to achieve this year to reach the 3-year goals. The 2,000 members is a stretch goal. We're maxed out on goals again this year.

Discussion around goals occurs.

Scott Fulton makes a motion to approve the 2024-25 V/TO through 1-year plan. Deanna Pomije seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

8. Employee Handbook

We tried to write it on the fly at the January Board meeting and upon reflection felt the language still wasn't clear. We're seeking final approval on the wordsmithing that we've done to pages 16-18.

Deanna Pomije makes a motion to approve the new language to the employee handbook. Alice Mirk seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

9. Board and Committee meeting schedule for 4th Quarter 2024-25

Meetings for the 4th Quarter of FY2024-25 have been added to the schedule.

Evanne Hunt makes a motion to approve the full FY2024-25 Board meeting and committee schedule. Jay Rutherford seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

H. Move to adjourn.

Jerry Newman makes a motion to adjourn. Alice Mirk seconds the motion. All in favor. Jim Rogala adjourns the meeting at 8:11pm

Future Board meetings

- June 11, 2024; 7-9PM
- September 17, 2024; 7-9PM
- November 12, 2024; 7-9PM
- January 17-18, 2025 (Meeting and Board Planning retreat)
- March 18, 2025; 7-9PM