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## **Board of Directors Meeting January 19, 2024; 12:30-2pm**

Members Present: Jessica Bizub, Gary Eldred, Katie Hahn, David Hamel, Rich Henderson, Evanne Hunt, Alice Mirk, Jerry Newman, Deanna Pomije, Jon Rigden, Jay Rutherford, Kay Wienke

Members Absent: Scott Fulton, Harvey Halvorsen, Jim Rogala and Stephen Winter

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

Guests: Peter Hartman (representing the Minnesota Driftless Chapter)

### **Agenda**

#### A. Call to Order/Roll Call

Due to the absence of President Jim Rogala, Vice President Alice Mirk chairs the meeting. Alice calls the meeting to order at 12:37pm.

#### B. Adopt Meeting Agenda

**Jay Rutherford makes motion to approve the meeting agenda. Evanne Hunt seconds the motion. All in favor. So moved. Motion passes.**

#### C. Approve Consent Agenda

**Jay Rutherford makes motion to approve the consent agenda. Jessica Bizub seconds the motion. All in favor. So moved. Motion passes.**

#### D. Treasurer's Report - Jerry Newman and Debra Behrens

It's too early to finalize numbers for December but the bottom line for our operating budget is that we had a 5% variance from plan which amounts to about a \$60,000 deficit. There were significant gains in restricted revenue, especially around land protection work, totaling almost \$2 million over the anticipated \$1.5 million. The Finance Committee will meet in February and review the December numbers which will be presented at the March Board meeting.

#### E. President's Report - Jim Rogala

Alice delivered Jim's remarks: Planning is very important. We are unique in our grassroots format which places a lot of local control with the Chapters. This weekend the Board needs to come together to plan and mitigate the growing pains moving forward. Thank you for being here and thank you for working so hard.

#### F. Executive Director's Report - Debra Behrens

No questions for Debra about her report. She did do a brief overview of the Traction Organizer and the idea of "Rocks."

#### G. New Business

##### General Board

##### 1. DISCUSSION: The Prairie Enthusiasts upcoming virtual conference, February 7-10

Duncan Schultz provides an update: conference is three weeks away and we're already getting lots of engagement on the online platform. Every staff member has an assigned role during the conference. Presenters have been invited to practice their presentations ahead of time. There will be six student presentations. Sarah Barron and Jerry Newman are working on the photo contest. Best year ever for sponsorship – we have 16 confirmed sponsors. Sarah Barron also arranged for an in-kind donation of advertising spots on public radio stations in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois and Iowa.

##### 2. ACTION ITEM: Northwest Illinois Chapter (NIPE) expansion to Whiteside County

NIPE currently operates in three counties and would like to expand into Whiteside County. Lots of conservation groups and possible land projects reside in Whiteside County. NIPE would need to recruit members/volunteers from Whiteside County. They already have volunteers who reside in Carroll County who are working on properties in Whiteside. The Natural Area Guardian group is very active in Whiteside. There will be many opportunities for partnerships with individuals and groups. Jerry suggested doing a membership type drive in Whiteside to build capacity. NIPE wasn't seeking to expand but it feels like the right time to do it.

**Rich Henderson moves to approve the addition of Whiteside County to NIPE's chapter area. Kay Wienke seconds the motion. All in favor. So moved. Motion passes.**

##### 3. ACTION ITEM: Authorizing resolution – Uren Trust (Empire-Sauk Chapter) grant application to the Dane County Conservation Fund

Uren protection project already came to the Board and received preliminary approval. Uren has both planted and remnant prairie. We're applying for Dane County funds and state stewardship funds. We've already secured funding from the Bobolink Foundation through our partnership with Southern Driftless Grasslands (SDG). Bobolink is contributing \$50,000 for operating support as well as \$200,000 in acquisition funding. Debra will be joining the SDG steering committee as Rich rotates off. Uren fits the priorities of SDG.

**Kay Wienke moves the Board approve a resolution to seek funding from the Dane County Conservation Fund for the Uren Trust project. Jay Rutherford seconds the motion. All in favor. So moved. Motion passes.**

Land Protection Committee

4. ACTION ITEM: Authorizing resolution - Mukwonago River Sand Barrens (Glacial Prairie Chapter) Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Funds (KNSF) grant request

We'll be applying for a grant (due March 1<sup>st</sup>) for KNSF towards the acquisition of the Mukwonago River Sand Barrens project. We don't have the requested amount yet because we're waiting for the appraisal to be completed. The KNSF application requires two signatures: the Executive Director and the person completing the application. Duncan Schultz will be the person listed as completing the application. The resolution included in the Board packet mistakenly listed site manager, Steve Sirkis.

**Kay Wienke moves the Board approve the authorizing resolution to apply for stewardship funds for the Mukwonago River Sand Barrens project after the form is updated to show Debra Behrens and Duncan Schultz as the authorizing signatures. Rich Henderson seconds the motion. All in favor. So moved. Motion passes.**

Executive Committee

5. ACTION ITEM: Employee Handbook updates

There's a typo on page 14 - "my view you" should be "may view you."

It wasn't clear that employees who work 30+ hours per week are considered full-time employees.

There's an extensive discussion around the language used in PTO section 7.2: "full time employee (see section 7.9) who work average under 40 hours per week and part-time employees earn PTO on a pro-rated basis." Debra clarifies that it's often a range of hours listed in an employee's offer letter so.

After discussion there's an agreement to use update Section 7.2 to: *"All regular full- and regular part-time employees are eligible for PTO. Employees earn PTO on a pro-rated basis on a 40 hours per week average maximum based on timesheets submitted at the end of the month."*

**Evanne Hunt makes motion to approve the Employee Handbook updates with the changes discussed. Kay Wienke seconds the motion. All in favor. So moved. Motion passes.**

Alice Mirk adjourns the meeting at 1:37pm.